MARVEL MASTERWORKS®

THE MIGHTY THOR®

VOLUME 17

THOR ®
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THE MIGHTY THOR®
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THE THUNDER GOD SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH IRON MAN AGAINST A MONSTER WHO THREATENS THE WORLD!

THE MIGHTY THOR Nos. 267-278
& MARVEL PREVIEW No. 10
LEN WEIN, WALTER SIMONSON,
ROY THOMAS & JOHN BUSCEMA

MARVEL

MARVEL MASTERWORKS

PRESENTS

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COLLECTING

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INTRODUCTION
BY ROY THOMAS

Back in my Editor in Chief days of 1972-74, I'd valued the presence of my young pal Gerry Conway, 'cause I felt he was the only guy around besides Stan and myself who could handle the Elizabethan/King James Bible patois into which Stan had evolved the *Thor* dialogue—so if Gerry hadn't been writing that feature, I might've had to, and I had other things I'd rather do. Luckily, when Gerry moved on, his buddy Len Wein was right there to pick up the slack, and he proved a worthy successor...even if, on the cover and splash page of *Thor* #270, he succumbed to the ungrammatical temptation to have the son of Odin shout, "Lay down and die!" Well, nobody's perfect.

Still, Len, teamed with relative newcomer/penciler Walter Simonson and inker/finisher Tony DeZuniga, produced some fine *Thor* tales in the first part of 1978, even if Walt was still a couple of years away from his groundbreaking stint as writer and artist of the Thunder God's comic. His and Len's Damocles (even without a sword to hang over our heads)…Stilt-Man (with adamantium-alloy armor, this time)…Blastaar…Faust…these were good opponents for Thor. But, for reasons that I know nothing of, it was decreed that #271 was that creative team's swan song on the title—and, for reasons I *likewise* know nothing of, the powers-that-were in New York offered it to me out in Los Angeles.

I'd loved Thor ever since I'd first bought *Journey into Mystery* #83 in summer of 1962. Yet, except for two issues of *Thor* in '75, I'd been content to utilize him in *The Avengers*, leaving his solo adventures to others.

Still, when the opportunity to script *Thor* came along again in '78, I decided to take the bull by the Viking-helmeted horns. I was still mostly avoiding getting entangled with Marvel's mainstream heroes; but I figured, hey, Thor spends most of his time in Asgard now, so I wouldn't need to have him interact with Spidey and the rest.

I suspect the fact that John Buscema was the penciler had something to do with my eager acceptance. If I knew in advance Tom Palmer would be inking those pencils, that clinched it. I'd loved the run of *Avengers* issues the three of us had done together half a decade earlier.

I started by having Thor recount an actual Norse myth about himself and his adopted brother Loki. I did that primarily to gain time to figure out precisely what I wanted to do with the character; and the chances are that, when I was handed the assignment, I had to get a plot synopsis out to John pronto. By the time I finished it, however, I'd figured out the direction I wanted to go.

Around the time in mid-1965 when I first wandered into Marvel's minuscule offices, Stan as writer/editor and Jack Kirby as co-plotter/penciler were finishing up my favorite of their Thor storylines to date. Reporter Harris Hobbs had taken a photo "proving" Thor and Dr. Don Blake were one and the same. So Thor had let himself be talked into taking Hobbs to Asgard—more in admiration for his determination than because of any blackmail threat. It was, I believe, the first time a human being had walked the Rainbow Bridge in the series. As it turned out, Hobbs mostly just wound up following Thor around; his camera smashed to smithereens, he couldn't even take photos of Thor battling the Absorbing Man there. Worse: Hobbs was later made to *forget* everything he'd seen in Asgard—except in dreams.

Well, evidently such dreams eventually knocked down the wall between Hobbs and his memories, because at the end of *Thor* #272 he informs the Thunder God that he's now a TV reporter, and he's promised his network to shoot a special about the Norse deities—"*and I'm gonna do it on location—in Asgard!*"

Thor turns him down flat and flies off. But Loki, god of never-ending mischief, helps Hobbs and a two-man TV crew (Joey on sound, and Red on camera) stow away inside a huge computer Thor has agreed to transport to immortal Asgard for safekeeping.

But—did I say "immortal"? Despite Stan often using that word to refer to Thor and his fellow Asgardians, those of us who were enthusiasts of actual Norse mythology knew they were *not* immortal like the Greco-Roman gods. They were just super long-lived—and their final fate had not only been predicted, it had actually been vividly *shown* to them, including in one of the Kirby-drawn "Tales of Asgard" a decade earlier. The twilight of the Norse gods would eventually, inevitably come, and it had a name: Ragnarok.

Loki not only intended to bring Ragnarok about; he liked the idea of it being filmed. Back in the 1960s, there'd been a famous hippie slogan—"The revolution will not be televised!"—and Loki was determined Ragnarok *would* be. Even if it became the *last* thing the inhabitants of Earth—Midgard—ever saw.

To that end, I began, with Big John's magnificently skillful help, fulfilling the prophecies that led to Ragnarok. Stan and Jack had played a bit fast and loose with them in that yarn wherein the prophetess Volla laid out the main outlines of what the Germans/Teutons called *Götterdämmerung*... but I was determined to follow the medieval "script" more closely. Both the Elder and Younger Eddas of Norse tradition—also referred to as the Poetic and Prose Eddas—had told the story of the Twilight of the Gods, with minor variations, back in the 13th century, and that was good enough for me. (Now if only somebody could tell me for certain what "Edda" means—either "grandmother" or "poetry," depending on which medieval scholar you ask, apparently.)

First, Odin has to return from a mission, minus one of his two eyes…so he does. He relates how he lost it in order to gain wisdom about the coming end of his world. Not that it would help anybody much.

Then other gods and goddesses return to Asgard for their last stand. Even Thor's buddy Balder gets killed for real in the run-up to Ragnarok, because the myths said he did. The prophecy is coming true. I also brought in Norse deities never before seen in Marvel comics, such as Hermod the messenger (I've always wondered why his name's so close to that of the Greek messenger god Hermes) and Sigyn, Loki's loving wife who's nonetheless willing to guide the hand of blind Hoder when he looses his fateful arrows at her errant husband.

But there was one added little twist I'd decided to toss into this particular telling of Ragnarok (which had previously been threatened several times in the Thor subdivision of the Marvel Universe).

I was going to bring in the "real" Thor.

Like I said, I'd loved the Lee/Kirby incarnation of Thor (as midwived by Larry Lieber) since the get-go. But I'd always been aware that, in myth, Thor had *red* hair, not blond, and would never have been called "Goldilocks" by friend or foe. He also rode around in a cart pulled by goats—an image that for some reason had had little appeal for Stan or Jack. But I was prepared to run with it!

And that's where cameraman Roger "Red" Norvell came in.

His hair came from the prerequisites of Norse myth, and his name from that of Red Norvo (né Kenneth Norville, one of the primo jazz xylophonists—not that there was a long list). With Loki's aid, he dons the Belt of Strength that in myth belonged to Thor, and becomes a more mythologically true version of Thor. In fact, he's able to do what far fewer souls had been able to do in decades of Marvel comics than they have in just a few years of Marvel movies—namely, wrest Thor's hammer Mjolnir away from him. (Reliving that scene in *Thor* #276 reminded me of how I'd disliked having his hammer destroyed by Hela in the 2017 film *Thor: Ragnarok*. That and Thor's ill-advised haircut—even if the barber *was* Stan the Man himself—were pretty much the only blemishes on an otherwise excellent movie. But that's just my personal taste, of course.)

An aside: At this point, readers' letters regarding *Thor* #272-plus began to be printed in letters sections. They were a mixed bag, at least at first. One reader referred to that issue as "Roy Thomas' greatest triumph." I was less pleased by another reader's anger at my bringing back "your obnoxious creation, Harris Hobbs"—unaware, apparently, that Hobbs was a Stan-and-Jack concoction. But by then, I was well into my Ragnarok retelling, and no fan mail was about to convince me it wasn't a story worth relating. Luckily, over the ensuing months, most readers approved enthusiastically—including at the newsstands. One letter writer, in fact, rhapsodized about how this storyline was the first to ever make Norse mythology "realistic" to him—which had been the reason Harris Hobbs and crew had been dragged to Asgard for this particular Ragnarok. If a significant number of people hadn't liked the story arc, it wouldn't have been collected. Still, I didn't feel total vindication for John's, Tom's and my efforts till I learned the sequence was due to be preserved between hard covers. That's my own particular version of "immortality." The closest I can come, anyway.

One moment in *Thor* #277 has particular personal resonance for me—the scene in which Loki is bound upon a mountaintop by "adamantine chains." I tossed that in because it harked back to the same words in a 1960s translation of Aeschylus' early Greek tragedy, *Prometheus Bound,* which had a similar scene. In a 1968 *Avengers* yarn, I'd mutated "adamantine" into the noun "adamantium," the name of the hardest substance ever imagined (or, as far as I'm concerned, imaginable). So this Loki scene was my own secret little homage to that earlier moment. Somehow, there seem to be echoes and similarities between Norse myths and Greek—and the chainings of Prometheus and Loki are a pair of those, methinks.

The Norse, in fact, had done the Greeks one better. While the bound Prometheus suffered from an eagle swooping down every day to tear at his liver, which was restored overnight only to be attacked anew come morning, the fettered Loki must endure the endlessly dripping, searing venom of the Midgard Serpent. His loving wife Sigyn catches some of the poison in a bowl and thus spares Loki a moment of torment—but every few seconds she must empty the bowl, and when she does, the venom strikes him anew. Even Dante in his *Inferno* didn't come up with anything more horrendous than that. So naturally, it belonged in a Marvel comic book about the Twilight of the Gods!

The "Ragnarok/TV" storyline ended in #278, after seven issues, and while I'll let the purchaser of this volume read its dynamic denouement for him/herself, I won't keep you in suspense: I was pleased with the way it turned out.

Well, there was *one* slightly sour note. For whatever reason, the final installment was inked not by Tom Palmer but by Chic Stone. I've nothing but respect for Chic as a professional; but I'd never warmed to his thick-line approach to inking on the mid-1960s *Avengers* and *X-Men*...or, earlier, over Kirby's *Fantastic Four*. I knew Chic had sufficient talent to ink in various styles; but Stan liked those thick lines, so naturally Chic kept them. Lots of readers liked them, too—and they still tell me so, to this day. To me, though, it had made those comics resemble coloring books, with their heavy outlines meant to contain youngsters' attempts with crayons. Chic did a superior job on *Thor* #278, but I'd still have given a reasonable percentage of my wages for that issue to his favorite charity if Tom Palmer had stuck around to ink the Ragnarok finale. Still, I don't recall a lot of readers complaining. "The tale's the thing," as someone once said.

In the end, this Ragnarok was both real—and, I suppose, as ephemeral as the others that had preceded it. Still, I've had a number of middle-aged folks come up to me at comics conventions and tell me it was their favorite of various Marvel Ragnaroks—at least maybe until Walt Simonson did his version, a few years later. Well, I guess bridging the gap between the best of Lee & Kirby and the superlative 1980s work done by Walt isn't the worst thing in the world.

At story's close, I had Thor fly off to begin another epochal storyline—the Judgment of the Celestials, emanating from Jack Kirby's *The Eternals*, which would begin in 1978's *Thor Annual* #7. Meanwhile, this volume ends with two stories from 1977's black-and-white magazine *Marvel Preview*—one of the blond-haired son of Odin, and one of his erstwhile buddy Hercules.

Len scripted the Thor one, and Jim Starlin, who was already beginning to concoct some of the most cosmic adventures in Marvel history (and thus in comics as a whole), was right there to aid and abet Len in a tale of the Thunder God's younger days.

For his part, in the Hercules tale, Bill Mantlo, a less-sung but talented writer, chose to follow a path that was roughly analogous to my own in *Thor* #272. His tale, ably illustrated by Val Mayerik, was a riff on one of Hercules' best-known mythological exploits—the days when he was a member of the crew of the *Argos,* as the Greek hero Jason led the so-called Argonauts in the quest for the Golden Fleece.

Bill, Len, and I, and the various artists involved…we were out to entertain you. That's all we were paid to do, all we were asked to do. If sometimes we tried to go a little further and introduce you to the wonders and enchantments of myth and legend beyond the comic book page—well, that's stuff we did on our own. Because we loved those old stories…and because we were convinced that *you*'d love them to.

And you know what? We were pretty much right!

2018

Roy Thomas has been a writer and often editor in the comics field since 1965, far more often for Marvel than for anyone else, and still works with Stan Lee on the Spider-Man *newspaper strip. He was pleased to see his Valkyrie and Grandmaster concepts (concocted with John Buscema, who else?) pop up in* Thor: Ragnarok *and maybe another film or two down the line. Still, though he's proud of his small contribution to the Marvel Cinematic Universe, he's even prouder of having worked on Marvel Comics.*

THOR ®

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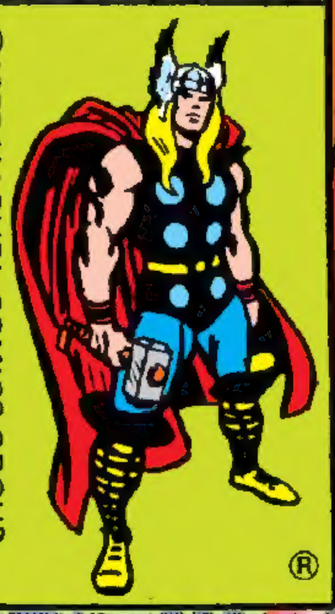

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THE MIGHTY

THOR ®

BY ODIN! I MUST STOP THE DEADLY MISSILE PLUNGING TOWARDS ME--

--ERE IT DESTROYS THE UNITED NATIONS!

THE THUNDER GOD RETURNS TO EARTH-- TO FIND CHAOS AWAITING HIM THERE!

TO MIDGARD -- AND MAYHEM!

When lame Dr. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic mallet MJOLNIR—and Blake is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm and the Lightning, Heir to the Throne of Immortal Asgard...

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!™

LEN WEIN ✶ WALT SIMONSON & TONY DeZUNIGA ✶ GLYNIS WEIN ✶ JOE ROSEN
WRITER/EDITOR — ARTISTS/ILLUSTRATORS — COLORIST — LETTERER

ONCE MORE, TO MIDGARD!

VERILY, THERE IS GREAT **REJOICING** IN IMMORTAL ASGARD THIS DAY. THE THREAT OF THE DREADFUL **DESTROYER** AT LAST IS **ENDED**, ALMIGHTY **ODIN** ONCE MORE SITS THE GOLDEN THRONE--

--AND **THOU**, O TRUE BELIEVER, ART HEREBY INVITED TO PARTAKE IN THE **FESTIVITIES!**

THE RECONSTRUCTION CERTAINLY GOES ***SWIFTLY***, MY FATHER!

AYE, THUNDER GOD-- ***MORE*** SWIFTLY THAN EVEN ***I*** HAD E'ER ANTICIPATED!

THE NOBLE ***BALDER*** DOTH TAKE HIS TASK MOST ***SERIOUSLY!***

"AYE, MILORD--THOUGH I FIND IT PASSING *STRANGE* TO BEHOLD SO VALIANT A *WARRIOR* CLAD IN THE GARB OF A SIMPLE *BUILDER!*"

GENTLY, MY FRIENDS! 'TIS OMNIPOTENT ODIN'S OWN *PILLAR OF SOVEREIGNTY* THOU DOST STRIVE TO *ERECT* HERE!

AYE, GOOD BALDER-- WELL DO WE *KNOW* THIS!

BUT YON PILLAR'S AWESOME *WEIGHT* DOTH TAX EVEN THE *STRONGEST* OF OUR CAREFULLY-CRAFTED *CABLES!*

WE MUST WORK MOST *CAUTIOUSLY*, LEST...

SHRAKKK

EH?

NAY! THE MASTER CABLE-- IT HATH BEGUN TO UNRAVEL--!

SWIFTLY, ALL-- WE MUST EASE THE STRAIN ERE...

BUT IT IS ALREADY FAR TOO LATE! FOR, WITH A SCREAM LIKE A SOUL IN TORMENT, THE CABLE IS SUDDENLY SEVERED...

SKKKRANG!

...AND UNTOLD TONS OF ORNATE MARBLE ABRUPTLY TOPPLE TOWARDS THE PANIC-STRICKEN THRONG BELOW!

FLEE, GOOD COMRADES!

FLEE FOR THY LIVES!!

BUT THEY CAN NE'ER FLEE SWIFTLY ENOUGH!

VERILY, THE DEATH-GODDESS HELA SHALL EMBRACE MANY NEW SUBJECTS THIS DAY...

"...LEST THE ENCHANTED MALLET MJOLNIR DOTH POSSESS POWER ENOW TO REVERSE THE TOWERING PILLAR'S PLUNGE!

SKA-THOOM!

"THANK THE FATES! MINE URU HAMMER HATH SET THE COLUMN UPRIGHT ONCE MORE..."

--AND *FINISH* THAT WHICH NOBLE *BALDER* HAD SO ABLY *BEGUN!*

...AND NOW, ERE IT CAN TOPPLE *ANEW*, I MUST REACH THE VERY *TOP* OF YON PILLAR--

*WITH THAT, THE GOD OF THUNDER BECOMES A **BLUR OF MOTION...***

*...AND WHEN, AT LAST, HE IS **THROUGH...***

WELL *DONE*, MY SON! THE PILLAR OF SOVEREIGNTY IS ONCE MORE *SECURE!*

'TIS NOTHING THAT *BALDER* WOULD NOT HAVE DONE, MILORD--HAD THAT CABLE NOT BEEN *SUNDERED!*

NOW, IF THOU WOULDST *EXCUSE* ME, MY LIEGE--I WOULD RETIRE TO MY *QUARTERS* FOR THE NONCE!

*WHICH IS WHERE WE **REJOIN** THE SON OF ODIN A SHORT WHILE **LATER...***

THOU DOST SEEM *TROUBLED*, MILORD. DOES MY NEW ATTIRE *DISTURB* THEE?

NAY, MILADY SIF--'TIS MERELY THE THOUGHT OF THAT WHICH WE MUST NEXT *WITNESS!*

THE TIME HATH COME FOR MINE HALF-BROTHER *LOKI* TO BE *SENTENCED* FOR HIS MANY CRIMES AGAINST THE *REALM ETERNAL!**

AND THOUGH THE GOD OF MISCHIEF IS TRULY *EVIL INCARNATE*, STILL I CANNOT HELP BUT *PITY* HIM NOW!

AND *THAT*, NOBLE THOR, IS WHY I *LOVE* THEE SO.

**AS WITNESSED THESE SEVERAL ISSUES PAST. --LEN.*

THUS SOON, WHEN THE BRASSY BLARE OF **TRUMPETS** HAS SUMMONED ALL AND SUNDRY TO THE **IMPERIAL THRONE ROOM...**

LOKI, THOU STANDEST ACCUSED OF **TREASON MOST HIGH**--OF PLOTTING TO **STEAL** THE GOLDEN THRONE, AND HOLD THY RIGHTFUL LORD AND LIEGE ETERNAL **CAPTIVE** OF THINE ARCANE ARTS!

THESE ARE MOST **SERIOUS** CHARGES INDEED, GOD OF MISCHIEF! THUS, FOR THE **RECORD**, I ASK THEE...

HOW DOST THOU **PLEAD**, MY SON?

PLEAD?

NAY, OMNIPOTENT ONE--THE PRINCE OF EVIL SHALL NEVER **PLEAD**--NOR EVER **BEG!**

THOU ART **OLD**, ODIN--FAR PAST THY **PRIME**--AND THE SIMPERING **GOD OF THUNDER** IS NO FIT **SUCCESSOR** TO THY ROYAL THRONE!

NAY, BY ALL RIGHTS, THE REALM ETERNAL SHOULD BE RULED BY **LOKI**--

--AND I WOULD SOONER **RENOUNCE** MINE IMMORTALITY **ENTIRE** THAN LIVE TO **SERVE** UNDER SUCH AS **THEE!**

THEN, IF THAT IS THY FERVENT **WISH**, IMPULSIVE ONE--

--SO BE IT!!

AND THOSE POOR ALCOHOL-BESOTTED SOULS ON MANHATTAN'S LOWER EAST SIDE HARDLY **NOTICE** THE SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF ONE MORE ALMOST-MINDLESS **DERELICT** IN THEIR MIDST...

...A DERELICT WHO ONCE HAD ALL BUT OWNED THE **STARS!**

PERHAPS, WHEN THE GOD OF MISCHIEF HAS FINALLY LEARNED HIS **LESSON**, I WILL **RESTORE** TO HIM HIS **MEMORY**...AND HIS **GODHOOD!**

AYE... **PERHAPS.**

THOU ART **WISDOM INCARNATE**, MY LIEGE. LET THY WILL BE **DONE.**

NOW, BY THY **LEAVE**, MILORD-- I WOULD BID **FAREWELL** TO A **FRIEND.**

RECORDER, WE SHALL **MISS** THEE! TRULY, THOU ART A BEING **NOBLE** BEYOND MEASURE!

STATEMENT: MY WORK HERE IS **DONE!** I HAVE WITNESSED THE END OF THE **ODIN-QUEST** AS ORDERED BY MY RIGILLIAN **MASTERS...**

...AND NOW THE TIME HAS COME FOR ME TO RETURN **HOME!**

RESOLUTION: BUT I SHALL NEVER **FORGET** WHAT I HAVE SEEN AT YOUR **SIDE**, ASGARDIAN...

...AND A **PART** OF ME WILL ALWAYS BE **WITH** YOU!

AND WHEN THE RECORDER HAS FINALLY FADED FROM **VIEW**...

VERILY, LOKI'S EXILE TO MIDGARD HATH SET ME TO **THINKING**--AND SET MINE HEART TO **STIRRING!**

METHINKS MAYHAP 'TIS TIME I **RETURNED** TO EARTH ONCE MORE--

--AND LET THE MORTAL **DR. DON BLAKE** TAKE UP HIS LIFE **ANEW!**

A **SPLENDID** IDEA, FRIEND THOR--AND WITH THY THREE STAUNCH **COMPANIONS** BESIDE THEE, METHINKS THERE'LL BE **ADVENTURE** A'PLENTY AWAITING US!

EH? BUT I... AH... I...

NAY, GOOD WARRIORS--THOUGH THE **THUNDER GOD** IS BOUND FOR **MIDGARD**, THERE IS STILL WORK FOR **YE** IN THE **REALM ETERNAL!**

MAGRAT, SNAYKAR, AND KRODA ARE STILL **AT LARGE**--AND MUST NEEDS BE BROUGHT TO **JUSTICE!** I CHARGE YE THREE TO **FIND** THEM!

AS **EVER**, ALL-FATHER--THY WORD IS OUR **WILL!**

WE SHALL RETURN **WITH** THOSE THREE SCOUNDRELS--OR WE WILL RETURN **NOT AT ALL!**

THEN, AFTER THE WARRIORS THREE HAVE RELUCTANTLY ***DEPARTED...***

IT IS **DONE!** THY COMRADES YET HAVE THEIR **PRIDE**, MY SON--WHILST **THOU** DOST HAVE THY **PRIVACY!**

AYE, FATHER--THOUGH FANDRAL, HOGUN AND VOLSTAGG ARE AS **BROTHERS** TO ME, STILL MUST I HAVE SOME TIME TO **MYSELF** NOW!

I **THANK** THEE... FOR **UNDERSTANDING!**

CANST **THOU** UNDERSTAND THAT, MILADY? THOUGH THE HEART OF **THOR** IS EVER **THINE**, THE SPIRIT OF **DON BLAKE** CRIES OUT FOR **RELEASE**--

--AND I MUST HEED ITS CALL **ALONE!**

THEN DO AS THOU **MUST**, BELOVED--AND KNOW THE LADY **SIF** SHALL COUNT THE DAYS TILL THY **RETURN!**

WHILE, AT THE VERY ***EDGE*** *OF THE GOLDEN CITY, A FAREWELL QUITE* ***DIFFERENT****--YET DISTRESSINGLY* ***SIMILAR****--IS EVEN NOW TAKING PLACE...*

ART THOU CERTAIN THOU MUST **GO**, KARNILLA?

THE **NORN QUEEN** NEEDS ANSWER TO **NO ONE**, BALDER!

IF THOU WOULDST **SEEK** ME, THOU KNOWEST WHERE TO **FIND** ME!

AYE, SORCERESS... THAT I **DO**.

AND, A SHORT WHILE LATER...

SOOTH, BUT THOU STANDEST SO *SILENTLY*, THUNDER GOD! IS THERE ANYTHING I MIGHT DO TO *AID* THEE?

NAY, VIGILANT HEIMDALL! 'TIS MERELY THAT IT HATH BEEN SO *LONG* SINCE LAST I STOOD UPON THE RAINBOW SPAN OF *BIFROST* THAT I HAD ALL BUT *FORGOTTEN* HOW TRULY *BEAUTIFUL* IS THE VIEW FROM HERE!

VERILY, IT DOTH GIVE EVEN AN *IMMORTAL* PAUSE TO PONDER HOW *INSIGNIFICANT* WE ALL ARE BEFORE THE MAJESTY OF THE *UNIVERSE!*

YET THERE IS BEAUTY AND WONDERMENT OF A WHOLLY *DIFFERENT* STRIPE AWAITING ME ON THE BRIGHT GREEN WORLD CALLED *EARTH!*

I NEED ONLY WHIRL MINE ENCHANTED HAMMER SWIFTLY *ABOUT* ME--

--AND THE FURIOUS *VORTEX* THUS CREATED SHALL SPEED ME TO MY SECOND *HOME!*

*IN A TWINKLING, THE SON OF ODIN IS **GONE** FROM THE RAINBOW BRIDGE...*

...AND INSTANTLY, ON THE BUSTLING STREETS OF **NEW YORK**, A GLAD-HEARTED **GOD** WALKS PROUDLY AMONG **MEN** ONCE MORE!

TAXI

BY ODIN, 'TIS GOOD TO **STAND** AGAIN UPON THIS WORLD WHICH IS SO **DEAR** TO ME!

YET, THOUGH MY SPIRIT SOARS TO **BE** HERE, 'TIS NOT FOR THOR **ALONE** THAT I HAVE **RETURNED** TO HECTIC MIDGARD!

THUS, LET THE MYSTIC MJOLNIR LIFT ME **SKYWARD**--

--THAT I MIND FIND A PLACE OF GREATER **CONCEALMENT** IN WHICH TO EFFECT MINE ALMOST-FORGOTTEN **TRANSFORMATION!**

AND WHEN THE GOLDEN-HAIRED ASGARDIAN HAS **LANDED** IN A SHADOWED **ALLEYWAY**...

I HAVE BUT TO **STRIKE** MINE ENCHANTED MALLET **ONCE** UPON THE **GROUND**--

"--AND THE GOD OF THUNDER WILL CEASE TO **BE** FOR A TIME--"

--SO THAT THE LAME **DOCTOR DONALD BLAKE** CAN AT LONG LAST TASTE OF **LIFE** AGAIN!

IT'S BEEN SO **LONG**, I'D NEARLY FORGOTTEN HOW **ALIVE** THIS CITY FEELS!

BUT MY **OFFICE** IS JUST AROUND THIS **CORNER**, AND...

HUH?

NO--IT'S **IMPOSSIBLE!** I COULDN'T HAVE BEEN GONE **THAT** LONG!!

MY OLD OFFICE BUILDING-- IT'S BEEN TORN DOWN--!

OZ-KRAP

AND THERE'S A HIGH-RISE PARKING LOT HERE IN ITS PLACE!!

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SHORTLY, AS THE BEWILDERED PHYSICIAN SLUMPS DEJECTEDLY ON A NEARBY PARK BENCH...

A YEAR, THEY TELL ME... IT'S BEEN AN ENTIRE YEAR SINCE MY LEASE LAPSED AND THEY TORE THE BUILDING DOWN!

I WONDER-- HOW MUCH ELSE HAS CHANGED WHILE MY ASGARDIAN ALTER EGO WAS GALAVANTING ACROSS THE UNIVERSE?

IN SO MANY WAYS, I HARDLY RECOGNIZE THIS CITY ANYMORE! DO I REALLY STILL BELONG HERE?

FOR A TIME, THE MELANCHOLY DONALD BLAKE SITS IN SILENT CONTEMPLATION, AS THE HURRIED RUSH OF HUMANITY PASSES BY ALL BUT UNNOTICED...

BUT THEN, AT LAST--

NO! DON BLAKE IS NO QUITTER!

IF THINGS HAVE CHANGED, THEN I'LL JUST HAVE TO CHANGE WITH THEM--

"--AND I KNOW JUST THE PLACE TO START!"

THUS, SOON AFTER, AT MANHATTAN'S FAMOUS TRINITY GENERAL HOSPITAL...

JACOB, IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, OLD FRIEND!

AND YOU, MY BOY! WHEN THEY TOLD ME THE EVER-ELUSIVE DR. DONALD BLAKE WAS HERE TO SEE ME, YOU COULD HAVE KNOCKED ME OVER WITH THE PROVERBIAL FEATHER!

HOW HAVE YOU BEEN KEEPING YOURSELF, MY BOY--

--AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN KEEPING YOURSELF?

I'M FINE, JACOB. I'VE-- AH-- BEEN OUT OF TOWN FOR A WHILE.

SO *TELL* ME THEN, MY BOY-- WHAT BRINGS YOU *BACK*?

FRANKLY, JACOB--I NEED YOUR *HELP*! WITH MY OLD OFFICES *DEMOLISHED*, AND MY OLD *PATIENTS* LONG SINCE SCATTERED TO MY *COLLEAGUES*, I'M LOOKING FOR *WORK* RIGHT NOW...

...AND I FIGURED IF *DOCTOR JACOB WALLABY*--MY OLD COLLEGE *MENTOR*--COULDN'T SUGGEST SOMETHING, *NOBODY* COULD!

DR. J. WALLABY
CHIEF OF STAFF

AND YOU'VE, OF COURSE, CONSIDERED OPENING A *NEW* PRACTICE *ELSEWHERE*, MY BOY?

IT WOULDN'T *WORK*, JACOB--NOT SO LONG AS I NEVER KNOW WHEN I MIGHT BE--AH--*CALLED AWAY* FOR LONG PERIODS!

THEN YOU REQUIRE SOMETHING A BIT MORE *FREE-WHEELING*, EH?

SOMETHING THAT'LL LET YOU PRACTICE *MEDICINE* WITHOUT *RESTRICTING* YOUR MOVEMENTS?

GRANTED, IT MAY SOUND *STRANGE*, JACOB--BUT THAT'S *PRECISELY* WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR!

WELL, AS YOU MAY *KNOW*, MY BOY--THIS HOSPITAL IS PARTIALLY FUNDED BY *STARK INTERNATIONAL*, TO ENABLE US TO STUDY VARIOUS NEW EXPERIMENTAL *SURGICAL TECHNIQUES*!

S. I. ALSO FUNDS A *PEOPLE'S FREE MEDICAL CLINIC* ON THE UPPER WEST SIDE...

...AND THEY'RE CONSTANTLY LOOKING FOR--IF YOU'LL EXCUSE THE EXPRESSION--*NEW BLOOD!*

IT DOESN'T *PAY* ANYTHING, BUT THE *OTHER* REWARDS ARE BEYOND CALCULATION! IF YOU CAN AFFORD THE *TIME*, IT'S SOMETHING YOU OUGHT TO LOOK *INTO*.

IT WOULD BE A SHAME TO SEE A *TALENT* LIKE YOURS GO TO *WASTE*!

THANK YOU, JACOB--IT SOUNDS LIKE JUST THE THING I'M *LOOKING* FOR!

TO BE HONEST, I'VE NEVER QUITE *UNDER-STOOD* YOU, MY BOY! YOUR SKILL AS A SURGEON *SURPASSES* ANY OTHER I'VE EVER SEEN--

--YET I'VE ALWAYS HAD THE FEELING MERE *MEDICINE* WASN'T ENOUGH FOR YOU...AS IF THERE WAS SOME-THING *INSIDE* YOU THAT CRAVED MORE *EXCITE-MENT*, MORE *ADVENTURE*...

BELIEVE ME, JACOB-- I'VE HAD JUST ABOUT ALL THE *EXCITEMENT* I CAN STAND FOR A...

WHA--?

THWAM!

WHAT'S *GOING ON* HERE?

THAT OVER-ENTHUSIASTIC INTERN DARED TO *ATTACK* ME, AND NOW HE HAS FELT THE FULL, UNFETTERED FURY OF-- **DAMOCLES!**

BUT IF YOU ALL WILL STAND PERFECTLY *STILL* WHILE WE *TAKE* THE MATERIAL WE HAVE *COME* FOR--NONE OF THE *REST* OF YOU NEED BE *HURT!*

THAT *CANISTER*-- IT CONTAINS THE *SYNTHETIC COBALT* STARK LENT US TO AID IN OUR *CANCER RESEARCH!*

GREAT SCOTT--*NO!* THEY CAN'T BE ALLOWED TO *ESCAPE* WITH THAT!

MY BOY-- *DON'T!!*

NOW A *CRIPPLE* ATTEMPTS TO SUBDUE ME?

FOOL!!

HE'S *RIGHT*--I *WAS* A FOOL! I'VE BEEN THE *THUNDER GOD* FOR SO LONG, I *FORGOT* MYSELF!

BROK!

CONSIDER YOURSELF *FORTUNATE* I LEAVE YOU YOUR *LIFE*, DOLT!

BUT DAMOCLES CAN AFFORD TO BE *GENEROUS* THIS DAY--

--FOR I HAVE GAINED THE *PRIZE* WHICH WILL SOON LAY THIS *CITY* AT MY *FEET!*

WE GOT THAT ATOMIC STUFF *LOCKED AWAY*, BOSS!

"THEN THERE IS NOTHING MORE TO *KEEP* US HERE, MY GOOD FELLOWS!

"THE TIME HAS COME FOR US TO *DEPART!*"

MY BOY, ARE YOU *ALL RIGHT?*

I'M *FINE*, JACOB-- BUT THAT *DAMOCLES* CHARACTER IS *GETTING AWAY!*

I WANT TO *THANK* YOU FOR ALL YOUR *ADVICE*, OLD FRIEND-- BUT I'M AFRAID I HAVE TO *RUN!*

I'LL TALK TO YOU *SOON*, OKAY?

PLEASE, MY BOY, I DON'T KNOW *WHAT* YOU HAVE IN *MIND*-- BUT I BEG YOU NOT TO BE *FOOLISH!*

DON'T *WORRY*, JACOB-- I'LL TRY TO BE *CAREFUL!*

AND, MOMENTS LATER, IN A SECLUDED *ALLEYWAY* NEARBY, THE LAME PHYSICIAN STRIKES HIS GNARLED WALKING STICK *ONCE* UPON THE GROUND...

...AND A FURIOUS *GOD OF THUNDER* TAKES TO THE GRAY-STREAKED *SKIES* ONCE MORE!

VERILY, MIDGARD HATH CHANGED *LESS* THAN I HAD *HOPED!*

STILL DOTH *CRIME* AND *INJUSTICE* RUN RAMPANT THROUGH ITS *STREETS*--

--BUT SO LONG AS THE SON OF ODIN DOTH CALL THIS WORLD HIS *OWN*--

--*TREACHERY SHALL NEVER TRIUMPH!!*

BRAK-KOOM!

BY THE STARS-- *NO!* IT'S THE AVENGER THEY CALL *THOR!*

THE CURSED THUNDER GOD POSSESSES *POWER* ENOUGH TO *THWART* ALL MY CAREFULLY-LAID *SCHEMES*, UNLESS...

QUICKLY, MEN-- *RELEASE THE DESTRUCT-DRONE!!*

BY THE BRISTLING BEARD OF ODIN! THE FIENDS HAVE LAUNCHED A FIERY MISSILE AT THE VERY HEART OF THIS FAIR CITY--

--AND IT DOTH STREAK TOWARDS THE TOWERING UNITED NATIONS BUILDING ITSELF!

IF I ATTEMPT TO STOP YON MISSILE, DAMOCLES WILL ESCAPE--

--BUT ONLY MINE ENCHANTED MALLET DOTH POSSESS THE OVERWHELMING SPEED REQUIRED TO OVERTAKE HIS DREADFUL WEAPON--

"--THOUGH I FEAR EVEN THE MYSTIC MJOLNIR MAY NOT REACH ITS TARGET IN TIME!"

DESPERATELY, AS IF POSSESSING A LIFE OF ITS OWN, THE THUNDER GOD'S WONDROUS WEAPON PURSUES ITS DEADLY QUARRY ACROSS THE ISLAND OF MANHATTAN...

...UNTIL, MERE FEET FROM THE WORLD FAMOUS MEETING HALL'S GLEAMING GLASS FACADE--

WHA-WHOOM!

--THE HURTLING HAMMER STRIKES HOME!

WHILE, WITHOUT HIS ENCHANTED MALLET TO SUSTAIN HIS FLIGHT, THE MIGHTY THOR PLUNGES EARTHWARD--

--EVEN AS HIS SPIRIT SOARS IN TRIUMPH!

PRAISE THE FATES! TRUSTY MJOLNIR STRUCK TRUE!

AND EVEN NOW, IT DOTH RETURN TO MINE *HAND*--AS ALMIGHTY ODIN'S ENCHANTMENT HATH DECREED IT EVER *MUST!*

THUS DO I TAKE UP THE *PURSUIT* OF THE DIABOLICAL *DAMOCLES* ONCE MORE--THOUGH HIS WELL-ARMED *AIRCRAFT* IS NOWHERE IN *SIGHT!*

*AND AFTER AN AIRBORNE **SEARCH** OF THE ENTIRE CITY HAS PROVEN **FRUITLESS**...*

IT APPEARS THE MAN CALLED DAMOCLES HATH *ESCAPED* ME FOR THE NONCE--

--BUT, BY MY TROTH, WE SHALL MEET *AGAIN!*

*AND EVEN AS THE THUNDER GOD PONDERS THE **PURPOSE** OF DAMOCLES' THEFT, IN THE HIDDEN LAIR OF THE MADMAN HIMSELF...*

NOW THAT WE *GOT* THIS ATOMIC STUFF, BOSS--WHADDA WE GONNA *DO* WITH IT?

IT'S REALLY QUITE *SIMPLE* MY FRIEND--WE'RE GOING TO CONSTRUCT A *COBALT CANNON!*

AND THEN THE CITY OF NEW YORK SHALL BOW TO MY *DEMANDS*--OR BE *WIPED CLEAN OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH!!*

NEXT ISSUE: **DEATH, THY NAME IS BROTHER!**

THOR ®

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THE MIGHTY THOR®

YOU'RE DOOMED, THUNDER GOD!

THE MATCHLESS MIGHT OF DAMOCLES WILL SWIFTLY DISINTEGRATE YOU!

DEATH, THY NAME IS BROTHER!

When lame Dr. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic mallet MJOLNIR—and Blake is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm and the Lightning, Heir to the Throne of Immortal Asgard...

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!™

LEN WEIN ✶ WALT SIMONSON & TONY DeZUNIGA ✶ GLYNIS WEIN ✶ JOE ROSEN
WRITER / EDITOR — ARTISTS / ILLUSTRATORS — COLORIST — LETTERER

DEATH, THY NAME IS BROTHER!

THE RAIN HAD BEGUN QUITE SUDDENLY, SENDING MANHATTAN'S MID-DAY PEDESTRIANS SCURRYING FOR SHELTER, THEIR JACKETS AND NEWSPAPERS HELD HIGH ABOVE THEIR HEADS--

--BUT THE LAME DR. DONALD BLAKE STROLLS THROUGH THE STORM UNHURRIED, ALMOST REVELING IN THE ICY SPRAY AGAINST HIS FACE, ALLOWING THE SHOWER TO WASH HIS TROUBLED MIND CLEAN ONCE MORE...

...AND HE HAS ALMOST SUCCEEDED, WHEN...

HEY-- YOUR NAME DON BLAKE?

WHAT--?!?

POLICE

SKREEECH!

SORRY IF WE *STARTLED* YA, MISTER -- BUT IF YOU *ARE* DR. BLAKE, WE COULD USE YER *HELP!*

HOW *SO*, OFFICER?

YER S'POSED TA BE FRIENDS WITH *THOR*, RIGHT? D'YA THINK YA CAN *CONTACT* THE THUNDER GOD --

--AN' TELL 'IM THE *COMMISSIONER* WOULD LIKE TA SEE 'IM *DOWNTOWN* RIGHT AWAY?

WELL, I'M NOT *PROMISING* ANYTHING, MIND YOU --

--BUT I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN *DO!*

AND FRANKLY, FRIEND, I CAN DO *PLENTY!*

AND SOON, IN A CONVENIENT ALLEYWAY...

BACK ON EARTH LESS THAN 24 *HOURS* AND NOTHING HAS REALLY *CHANGED...*

THOK!

...A NEW *CRISIS* SEEMS TO REAR ITS HEAD EVERY OTHER *MINUTE...*

...AND ONLY THE MYSTIC MALLET *MJOLNIR* DOTH POSSESS *POWER* ENOW TO *COMBAT* THEM!

THEN, AS THE ENCHANTED HAMMER CARRIES ITS HEROIC MASTER ACROSS THE CITY...

THE STORM IN THE SKY HATH *ABATED* -- BUT THE STORM IN MY *HEART* ERUPTS *ANEW!*

WHATE'ER DARES *THREATEN* THIS CITY I HOLD *DEAR*, IT SHALL FACE THE SWIFT AND RIGHTEOUS WRATH OF -- *THOR!*

AND EVEN AS THE THUNDER GOD *ALIGHTS* BEFORE THE *HALL OF JUSTICE*...

HEY, *LOOK*--IT'S *THOR!*

MAYBE *HE* HAS A HANDLE ON THIS *DAMOCLES* THING!

EXCUSE ME, SIR--BUT MAY WE HAVE A *WORD* WITH YOU?

OUR VIEWERS WOULD LOVE TO KNOW THE *DETAILS* OF HOW YOU DESTROYED THE *MISSILE* THAT DAMOCLES FIRED AT THE *UNITED NATIONS* YESTERDAY!*

COULD YOU *SMILE* FOR THE *CAMERA*, PLEASE?

*LAST ISSUE OUR TIME. --LEN.

METHINKS THOU DOST MAKE *TOO MUCH* OF MINE ACTIONS, GOOD FELLOWS!

I MERELY DID MY DUTY AS I *SAW* IT--NOTHING *MORE!*

NOW, IF THOU WOULDST *EXCUSE* ME...?

HEY--*WAIT!* YOU CAN'T JUST *WALK OFF* LIKE THAT! WE WANT SOME *ANSWERS!*

WELL, YOU'LL JUST HAFTA *WAIT* FOR 'EM, FRIEND!

GOLDILOCKS HAS GOT SOME *BUSINESS* NOW--WITH THE *CHIEF!*

AND THUS, MOMENTS *LATER*...

THOU DIDST *CALL* AND THOR HATH *ANSWERED*, COMMISSIONER!

HOW MAY THE SON OF ODIN *SERVE* THEE?

WE APPRECIATE YOUR *RESPONDING* TO OUR INVITATION SO *QUICKLY*, THOR! WE MAY HAVE A *BREAKTHROUGH* ON THIS *DAMOCLES* CASE!

BY ODIN, THAT IS *JOYOUS* NEWS INDEED, MY FRIEND! SUCH *VILLAINY* MUST BE BROUGHT TO *TASK*--AND *SWIFTLY!*

THEN PLEASE COME INTO MY *OFFICE*, THOR! I HAVE SOME-ONE THERE I'D LIKE YOU TO *MEET!*

...A MOST NONDESCRIPT SOMEONE INDEED!

F-FORGIVE MY NERVOUSNESS, THOR-- BUT I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY MET A REAL-LIVE GOD BEFORE!

Y-YOU LOOK MUCH TALLER THAN YOU DO ON TELE-VISION!

OH... UH... MY NAME IS BENNETT BARLOW!

PLEASE, MR. BARLOW--TIME IS CRUCIAL AT THE MOMENT! NOW THAT THOR IS HERE, AS YOU REQUESTED...

...WILL YOU KINDLY DIVULGE THE INFORMATION YOU CLAIM TO HAVE, REGARDING DAMOCLES?

AYE, MORTAL--IF THOU DOST KNOW THE EVIL ONE'S WHEREABOUTS, PRAY SPEAK!

ALL I KNOW ABOUT HIS CURRENT BUSINESS IS WHAT I READ IN THE PAPER, I'M AFRAID--BUT I CAN TELL YOU ALL ABOUT HIS BACKGROUND!

YOU SEE, THE MAN YOU CALL DAMOCLES IS ACTUALLY ERIC BARLOW...

BUGLE

FOO UN ATTACK!

...MY BROTHER!!

THEN, BY THE BRISTLING BEARD OF ODIN-- SAY ON, MAN!

I WOULD KNOW MORE OF WHAT CREATES SUCH A MAN AS DAMOCLES!

"I DON'T KNOW, MAYBE ERIC WAS ALWAYS LIKE THIS--CONFUSED, SEARCH-ING FOR SOMETHING...

"...AND TAKING HIS FRUSTRA-TIONS OUT ON THE ONE WHO LOVED HIM MOST IN ALL THE WORLD...HIS LITTLE BROTHER... ME!

"I MEAN, NOBODY WAS PROUDER THAN I WAS, WHEN ERIC GRADUATED COLLEGE THE YEAR I ENTERED...

"HE'D MADE HONORS ALL THE WAY...THE TOP OF HIS CLASS...HE HAD THE WHOLE WORLD AT HIS FEET...

"...BUT SOMEHOW, THINGS JUST KEPT GETTING WORSE!

"ERIC DRIFTED FROM JOB TO JOB, STILL LOOKING FOR A DIRECTION...

"...WHILE I THOUGHT I'D *FOUND ONE!*

PEACE NOW!

PEACE NOW!

"WHEN THIS NATION'S COLLEGES SHOOK WITH *PROTEST,* I WAS RIGHT THERE ON THE *FRONT LINES...*

"...EVEN AS POOR *ERIC* FADED FURTHER INTO THE *BACKGROUND!*

"I WAS YOUR CLASSIC *COLLEGE REVOLUTIONARY,* EVEN TO MAJORING IN *PHYSICS,* SO I COULD LEARN TO BUILD MY OWN *NUCLEAR BOMB* IF NECESSARY...

"...WHILE MY *BROTHER* JUST STOOD BY, *WATCHING!*

"IRONICALLY, MY EDUCATION *PAID OFF* IN THE END, WHEN THE PROTESTS QUIETLY *DIED,* MY PHYSICS DEGREE GOT ME A JOB *TEACHING* AT CITY UNIVERSITY...

"A FEW YEARS BACK, I GOT *MARRIED*... AND ERIC WENT HIS SEPARATE *WAY!*

"UNFORTUNATELY, I LOST *SIGHT* OF ERIC AFTER THAT! HE'D FINALLY BECOME A TOTAL *NON-ENTITY*... FADING COMPLETELY INTO THE *SHADOWS...*

"I KNEW NOTHING MORE *ABOUT* HIM... UNTIL I SAW HIS *PICTURE* IN TODAY'S *PAPER!*"

A FASCINATING TALE *INDEED,* FRIEND BARLOW-- BUT 'TWILL TAKE MORE THAN *THAT* FOR US TO *FIND* THY BROTHER!

GEE, I...I DON'T KNOW WHAT *ELSE* I HAVE TO OFFER, EXCEPT...

WELL, I CAN SHOW YOU THE *HOUSE* WHERE WE BOTH *ROOMED* TOGETHER, IF THAT WOULD BE A *HELP.*

'TIS A PLACE TO *START,* MORTAL! WITH *LUCK,* 'TWILL BE *ENOUGH!*

I CERTAINLY *HOPE* SO.

"THEN LET US BE *OFF,*" *THE THUNDER GOD CRIES, WHIRLING HIS HAMMER AND SNATCHING THE STARTLED TEACHER CLEAN OFF HIS FEET...*

HEY, THERE GOES *THOR*-- AND HE NEVER GAVE US THAT *INTERVIEW!*

DDK

DDK

YOU MANAGE TO *CATCH* HIM, FELLA--AND YOU'RE WELCOME TO AN *EXCLUSIVE!*

BUT EVEN AS THE PRINCE OF ASGARD AND HIS SLIGHTLY-NAUSEOUS **PASSENGER** STREAK HIGH OVER THE CITY'S CLUTTERED **AVENUES**, LET'S TURN OUR ATTENTION TO A HIDDEN SANCTUARY SOMEWHERE **BENEATH** THOSE SELF-SAME STREETS--

--AND RE-INTRODUCE THE SULLEN-EYED **OBJECT** OF THE THUNDER GOD'S QUEST...

CAREFUL, EVERYONE-- **CAREFUL** NOW!

YOU'RE DEALING WITH **FORCES** HERE THAT CAN **DEVASTATE** THIS ENTIRE **CITY!**

...THE SELF-STYLED **TERRORIST** WHO CALLS HIMSELF **DAMOCLES!**

AND SOON-- **SOON**-- WHEN OUR WEAPON IS **FINISHED**, THE SIMPERING FOOLS WHO ABUSED AND IGNORED ME WILL **FEEL** THAT POWER!

LIKE THE **SWORD** WHICH DANGLED BY A THREAD OVER THE HEAD OF OF THE **ORIGINAL** DAMOCLES, THE THREAT OF MY **COBALT-CANNON** WILL HANG OVER **THEIR** HEADS--

--AND **SEND** THEM TO MY **WILL!!**

SOON, I SHALL BE **REPAID** FOR ALL THE **INDIGNITIES** I HAVE BEEN FORCED TO ENDURE... AYE, **SOON!**

BUT WHAT ABOUT **US**, BOSS? WHEN WILL **WE** BE REPAID?

WE GOT **INTO** THIS GIG **BE**CAUSE YOU PROMISED US **BIG BUCKS**, REMEMBER?

EH?

YOU DARE TO QUESTION MY *JUDGMENT*, YOU SIMPLE-MINDED *FOOL*?

NOBODY DISPUTES THE WORD OF *DAMOCLES*-- WITHOUT *PAYING* FOR IT IN *FULL*!!

BWA-DOW!

*IT TAKES DAMOCLES ONLY A **MOMENT** TO DRAW AND FIRE-- JUST LONG ENOUGH FOR **MORTAL FEAR** TO WELL UP IN HIS HENCHMEN'S **THROATS**!*

*BUT IT IS A FEAR THAT SEEMS **UNFOUNDED**, AS THE **CONCUSSION-SHELL** STRIKES ONLY A STACK OF EMPTY **OIL DRUMS**...*

KWA-VA-VOOM!

*...SENDING MEN AND METAL **SPRAYING** ACROSS THE ROOM!*

*AND WHEN THE SAVAGE TURMOIL HAS SETTLED INTO A SMOLDERING SEMBLANCE OF **ORDER** ONCE MORE...*

YOU WOULD ALL DO WELL TO *REMEMBER* THIS LITTLE DEMONSTRATION, GENTLEMEN! *NEXT* TIME, I WILL NOT BE SO *LENIENT*!

I AM *MASTER* HERE -- COMPLETE AND *ABSOLUTE*-- AND HE WHO DARES TO DEFY MY WILL...*DIES*!!

WH-WHATEVER YOU *SAY*, BOSS!

YA AIN'T GONNA GET NO MORE ARGUMENT FROM *US*!

*HIS FACE A COLD, GRIM **MASK**, THE MALEVOLENT DAMOCLES STRIDES INTO HIS PRIVATE **CHAMBERS**...*

*...WHERE, ONCE HE HAS **SEALED** THE DOOR **BEHIND** HIM...*

I HELD THEM IN CHECK *THIS* TIME, BUT WHAT ABOUT *NEXT* TIME, OR THE TIME AFTER *THAT*?

I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH *LONGER* I CAN *CONTROL* THEM! THINGS ARE DEFINITELY STARTING TO GET *OUT OF HAND*!

*AND THOUGH THE CHAMBER IS UNCOMMONLY **WARM**, DAMOCLES SUDDENLY **BEGINS TO TREMBLE**.*

WHILE, IN A MAXIMUM-SECURITY PRISON, SOMEWHERE UPSTATE...

I'VE GOT TO THINK THIS THROUGH... WORK OUT A PROPER PLAN...

NO PRISON HAS EVER HELD ME BEFORE--AND THIS ONE WON'T BE AN EXCEPTION!

IF I COULD ONLY GET MY HANDS ON MY OUTFIT, I MIGHT... EH?

THE OUTSIDE WALL--IT'S BEGUN TO MELT--!?!

GOT TO FIND COVER BEFORE IT...

...EXPLODES.

SKROOM!

AND BEFORE THE SHATTERED RUBBLE CAN SETTLE...

I HAVE COME FOR YOU, LITTLE MAN!

NO! STAY AWAY FROM ME--!!

Y-YOU'RE NOT HUMAN!!

BUT THE BESPECTACLED CONVICT'S TERRIFIED CRIES ARE STIFLED, AS HE IS SWEPT OFF THE GROUND BY AN INHUMANLY-POWERFUL ARM, AND...

KEEP FIRING, MEN! WE CAN'T LET THEM ESCAPE!

BLAM!

BLAM!

BUT THEY ARE ALREADY GONE!

THE OLD BROOKLYN NEIGHBORHOOD HASN'T REALLY **CHANGED** MUCH; THE **BROWNSTONES** COULD STILL USE A GOOD COAT OF **PAINT**, THE **CURBS** ARE STILL CRACKED AND RUTTED...

...AND YET BENNETT BARLOW FEELS A SMALL TINGE OF **NOSTALGIA** AS HE STANDS BEFORE THE RUN-DOWN BUILDING HE ONCE CALLED **HOME**-- AS IF HE HAS **LOST** SOMETHING HE MAY NEVER **REGAIN!**

A **MODEST** ABODE, THINE DWELLING-- NOT AT ALL LIKE THE GLEAMING SPIRES OF IMMORTAL **ASGARD!**

I'M AFRAID WE **MORTALS** HAVE TO MAKE DO WITH **SIMPLER** STUFF, THOR--

--BUT STILL, I ONCE **LOVED** THIS PLACE!

AYE, FRIEND BARLOW-- **FORGIVE** ME! A MAN'S HOME IS INDEED HIS **CASTLE**-- BE IT MADE OF PRECIOUS **GOLD** OR HUMBLE **BRICK!**

IT WASN'T REALLY A **CASTLE**, THOR-- MORE LIKE A **REFUGE!**

AND, TO BE **HONEST**, I'M STILL NOT ENTIRELY SURE WHAT WE HOPE TO **FIND** HERE...

IT'S REALLY QUITE **SIMPLE**, DEAR BROTHER-- YOU'RE GOING TO FIND YOUR **DEATH!**

BY HELA'S COLD TOUCH! WE HAVE BEEN TAKEN **UNAWARES!**

LORD-- **NO!** I-- I PRAYED IT WASN'T **TRUE**--!!

STILL AS **NAIVE** AS EVER-- EH, BENNETT? I DON'T KNOW WHAT POSSESSED YOU TO LEAD THE INFURI-ATING **THOR** TO OUR OLD **HOMESTEAD**--

--BUT YOU'RE JUST IN TIME TO WITNESS A SMALL **DEMONSTRATION** OF MY NEWLY-GAINED **POWERS!**

ERIC-- **NO!** GIVE UP THIS **INSANITY**-- WHILE YOU STILL **CAN!**

NAY, FRIEND BARLOW-- METHINKS 'TIS ALREADY FAR **TOO LATE** FOR THAT!

GRINNING TRIUMPHANTLY, THE MAN CALLED DAMOCLES STABS A BUTTON ON THE CONTROL BOARD BEFORE HIM-- AND BRIGHT BLUE FIRE SWIFTLY ERUPTS FROM THE COBALT-CANON'S MAW...

ERIC-- NO!!

THOU DOST ENTREAT THY BROTHER IN VAIN, FRIEND BARLOW!

HE DOTH MEAN TO DISPOSE OF US BOTH!!

BUT, SIZZLING THROUGH THE SPACE WHERE BARLOW AND THUNDER GOD HAD STOOD SPLIT-SECONDS BEFORE, THE AWESOMELY- POWERFUL BEAM OF COBALT-ENERGY IN-STEAD STRIKES THE BROWNSTONE BUILDING WHERE THE BARLOW BROTHERS HAD ONCE LIVED--

WHA-WHOOM!

--AND REDUCES IT TO AN IN-CINERATED MEMORY!!

SWEET HEAVEN-- THE POWER OF THAT DEVICE--IT'S ALMOST UNIMAG-INABLE!

MY BROTHER OR NOT, ERIC HAS TO BE STOPPED!

AYE, FRIEND BARLOW-- AND 'TIS MY TASK TO SEE TO IT!

FOOL! SO LONG AS THE COBALT- CANNON IS MINE, THERE IS NOTHING THAT CAN STOP ME!

AT MY COMMAND-- FIRE!!

FIRE IF THOU *MUST*, VARLETS--

--BUT, SO LONG AS THE MYSTIC *MJOLNIR* CAN *DEFLECT* THY FIERY POWER--

SPRAKK

--THOU DOST FIRE IN VAIN!!

AND, DESPITE HIS URU **HAMMER** WHIRLING WILDLY BEFORE HIM, THE THUNDER GOD **STILL** CATCHES THE FULL **FURY** OF THE COBALT-STORM...

...AND THE OVERWHELMING **FORCE** OF IT ALL QUITE LITERALLY **BLOWS HIM AWAY!!**

WELL, IF *CONCENTRATED* COBALT-BLASTS CAN'T STOP YA, GOLDILOCKS--

--LET'S TRY A *WIDE-FOCUS BURST!!*

AARRGGHH!!

WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW THE MOST *IRONIC* PART OF ALL THIS, DEAR BROTHER?

IT WAS YOUR OWN *RESEARCH* BACK IN YOUR *COLLEGE DAYS* THAT SUPPLIED ME WITH THE KNOWLEDGE TO *CONSTRUCT* MY COBALT-CANNON!

THAT'S REALLY SOMEHOW MOST *FITTING*, ISN'T IT?

HOW DOES IT *FEEL*, DEAR BROTHER, KNOWING THAT EVERYTHING WHICH IS ABOUT TO *HAPPEN* TO NEW YORK CITY IS ULTIMATELY *YOUR FAULT*?

Y-YOU CAN'T *GET AWAY* WITH THIS, ERIC! ONE WAY OR *ANOTHER*, WE'RE GOING TO *STOP* YOU!

TELL ME, BENNETT-- HOW DOES IT *FEEL*?

DO YOU *HEAR* ME? WE'LL *STOP* YOU!!

HA HA HA HA

*BUT THE ONLY **RESPONSE** THAT DAMOCLES GIVES IS A HAUNTING PEAL OF **LAUGHTER!***

DID YOU SEE MY BROTHER'S *FACE*? THAT *LOOK* ALONE WAS WORTH ALL THE *HUMILIATION* I'VE ENDURED OVER THE YEARS!

WELL, WHAT *NOW*, BOSS?

EH? WHAT DO YOU *MEAN*?

NOW THAT WE'VE PROVEN THIS GIZMO OF YOURS *WORKS*, DON'T YA THINK IT'S TIME WE WENT AFTER THE *MONEY*?

WELL, I HAD *PLANNED* TO...TO...

NO--PERHAPS YOU'RE *RIGHT*, MY FRIEND!

THIS CRUEL, UNCARING WORLD *OWES* US-- OWES US *GREATLY*--

--AND, AS OF *NOW*, WE BEGIN TO *COLLECT*!!

BY ODIN... WHAT...?

Y-YOU WERE KNOCKED *UNCONSCIOUS* BY ERIC'S COBALT-CANNON, THAT'S ALL...JUST KNOCKED *UNCONSCIOUS*!

ANYONE *ELSE* WOULD HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY *INCINERATED*!

THE SON OF ODIN IS MADE OF *STERNER STUFF*, FRIEND BARLOW--BUT *NO* MAN MAY STRIKE THE PRINCE OF ASGARD WITH *IMPUNITY*!

DIDST THOU *SEE* WHICH WAY THY VILLAINOUS BROTHER *FLED*?

H-HE HEADED *WEST*... I THINK.

THEN, WHITHER HE HATH *TRAVELED*, WE SHALL *FOLLOW*--

--TO PUT AN *END* TO HIS MADNESS *FOREVER*!!

VERILY, HAD I BUT *KNOWN* HIS THEFT OF THAT SYNTHETIC COBALT * WOULD CAUSE SUCH *CHAOS*, I'D HAVE...

WHAT--?!?

DID YOU SAY... *SYN-THETIC* COBALT?

AYE, FRIEND BARLOW, BUT...

*LAST ISH, RIGHT?--LEN.

YOU DON'T *UNDERSTAND*, THOR--SYNTHETIC COBALT IS *UNSTABLE!*

BY ODIN-- *NAY!*

UNLESS WE *FIND* ERIC BEFORE IT REACHES *CRITICAL MASS*, THAT CANNON WILL BECOME A *COBALT BOMB* WHICH CAN *ERADICATE NEW YORK!!*

THEN LET MINE ENCHANTED *HAMMER* STRAIN AS IT NE'ER HATH STRAINED *BEFORE!*

FOR HAVING ONCE BEEN *BATHED* IN THE RAYS OF THE COBALT-CANNON, MIGHTY MJOLNIR CAN NOW *TRACE* THAT SAVAGE POWER TO ITS *SOURCE!*

*BUT EVEN AS THE GOD OF THUNDER AND HIS COMPANION HURTLE THROUGH THE HEAVENS, THAT AFOREMENTIONED **SAVAGE POWER** IS ONCE AGAIN AT **WORK**...*

SKADA-WHOOM!

*...REDUCING THE THICK STEEL **VAULT DOOR** OF A CERTAIN 47th STREET **JEWELRY EXCHANGE** TO SO MUCH **SCRAP METAL!***

QUICKLY, MEN-- *GET TO WORK!!*

YOU *GOT* IT, BOSS! THIS JOINT'LL BE STRIPPED *NAKED* BY THE THE TIME THE *COPS* GET HERE!

EDDIE'S GOT EVERY-ONE *COVERED!* LET'S *MOVE IT!*

MAN, WILL YA LOOK AT ALL THEM *JEWELS!*

THERE'S ENOUGH *"ICE"* HERE TA START OUR OWN *SKATIN' RINK!*

QUIT *YAKKING*--AND START *VACUUMING*, WILL YA?

WHADDA YA SO *UP-TIGHT* ABOUT? WITH THAT CRAZY *CANNON* BACKIN' US--

--WE AIN'T GOT NOTHIN' TA *WORRY* ABOUT!

BUT THEN AGAIN...

SLAMM!!

...YOU MIGHT HAVE *PLENTY* TO WORRY ABOUT!

YOU *FOOLS*--THE THUNDER GOD HAS *FOUND* US AGAIN!!

KEEP HIM *OCCUPIED*--WHILE I ACTIVATE THE *COBALT-CANNON!!*

DAMOCLES, I SAY THEE-- *NAY!!*

UNLEASH THY FIENDISH WEAPON-- AND *THOU TOO* SHALT SUFFER!

IF ANYBODY'S GONNA *SUFFER* AROUND HERE, LONG-HAIR--

--IT'S *YOU*!!

*AND AS THE ANGRY THUNDER GOD IS **LOST** BENEATH A WRITHING SEA OF FURIOUS **FLESH**, BENNETT BARLOW **RUSHES** TO HIS BROTHER'S **SIDE**...*

IN THE NAME OF *SANITY*, ERIC--TURN THAT DOOMSDAY DEVICE *OFF*!

NOT UNTIL THE ANNOYING *THOR* IS FINALLY *DESTROYED*!

YOU *MANIAC*! YOU'RE GOING TO DESTROY US *ALL*!

THE COBALT YOU USED WAS *UNSTABLE*! LOOK AT THE *GLOW* AROUND YOUR CANNON! I'M TELLING YOU IT'S GOING TO *EXPLODE*!

NO.

IT ISN'T *POSSIBLE*--! NOT AFTER ALL MY *WORK*-- ALL MY *PLANNING*--!

THERE MUST BE SOMETHING I CAN *DO* BEFORE...

AYE, FANATIC ONE-- THERE IS *INDEED*!

HUH?

THOU CANST *SURRENDER* THYSELF, DAMOCLES--

--WHILST STILL THOU ART *ABLE*!!

THIS IS ALL *YOUR* FAULT, THOR! BUT BEFORE I'D GIVE UP *NOW*--

--I'LL SEE US ALL IN *HELL*!!

ERIC-- NO!!

I--I CAN'T LET YOU FIRE THAT CANNON!

TURN IT OFF, ERIC-- NOW!!

TURN IT OFF--OR I SWEAR I'LL SHOOT!

DO IT, ERIC-- PLEASE! DON'T FORCE ME TO HURT YOU!

YOU-- HURT ME? DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH!

YOU'RE A SPINELESS SNIVELER, DEAR BROTHER-- AND THAT'S ALL YOU EVER WILL BE, UNTIL THE DAY YOU...

BAM!

...DIE?

"DO SOMETHING, THOR!" SHOUTS BENNETT BARLOW, AS HIS BROTHER TOPPLES FROM HIS SEAT OF POWER, "THE COBALT-CANNON IS ABOUT TO EXPLODE!!"

THEN THOU HADST BEST PRAY, FRIEND BARLOW, THAT MIGHTY MJOLNIR CAN CREATE A RAGING VORTEX POWERFUL ENOUGH TO SWEEP THIS DREADED DOOMSDAY DEVICE AWAY!

AND THE OVERWHELMING **SIGH OF RELIEF** THAT IS HEARD, AS THE VORTEX-TOSSED COBALT-CANNON ABRUPTLY **VANISHES,** IS FAR MORE **AUDIBLE** THAN THE MIND-SHATTERING **MEGA-BLAST** WHICH SIGNALS THE DEATH-DEALING WEAPON'S **DESTRUCTION**--

--FOR THERE IS, AFTER ALL, NO **SOUND** IN THE FRIGID DEPTHS OF **SPACE!**

'TIS **OVER,** FRIEND BARLOW!

AND, VERILY, THIS FAIR CITY DOTH OWE THEE A GREAT VOTE OF **THANKS!**

THOU HAST SAVED **LIVES BEYOND NUMBERING** THIS DAY-- THOUGH THOU HAST **LOST** A LIFE MOST **PRECIOUS** TO THEE IN THE PROCESS!

I SHALL LEAVE THEE ALONE WITH THY **GRIEF** NOW, BENNETT BARLOW--

--AYE, AND WITH THIS **THOUGHT** AS WELL!

THOUGH THY BROTHER LIVED IN **INFAMY**--TRULY DID HE DIE IN **GLORY!**

FOR HOW MANY **OTHER** MEN HAVE LEFT A **STAR** TO MARK THEIR **PASSING?**

NEXT ISSUE: **A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE!** BE HERE!

THOR ®

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THE MIGHTY THOR ®

THE STILT-MAN HATH RETURNED--AND MY HAMMER CANNOT STOP HIM!!

BUT HIS ROCKET-PODS MAY SOON SLAY ME!!

AND IF THAT ISN'T TROUBLE ENOUGH FOR OUR HERO--WAIT'LL YOU SEE STILTY'S NEW PARTNER!

When lame Dr. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic mallet MJOLNIR—and Blake is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm and the Lightning, Heir to the Throne of Immortal Asgard...

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!®

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A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE!

NOW HERE'S SOMETHING YOU DON'T SEE EVERY DAY: A CLASSIC FIGURE OF NORSE MYTHOLOGY, **PERUSING** THE LOCAL TABLOIDS.

SURPRISED, FAITHFUL ONE? **ASTONISHED?** WELL, YOU **SHOULDN'T** BE!

AFTER ALL, EVEN A **THUNDER GOD** HAS TO KEEP **UP ON THE NEWS SOMEHOW!**

Tom and Dixie on Broadway

DAILY BUGLE

SPIDER-MAN AND THE GREEN GOBLIN--

PARTNERS IN CRIME?

MAN, I'D NEVER'VE **BELIEVED** IT! OL' GOLDILOCKS **HIMSELF**-- STOPPIN' AT **MY** NEWSSTAND!

AND I WISH TO *THANK* THEE FOR THY *HOSPITALITY*, FRIEND NEWSDEALER. LACKING SUITABLE *COIN OF THE REALM*, I CANNOT *REPAY* THEE FOR THE USE OF THY...

EH?

HEY--IT'S *THOR!*

OH, *WOW*-- IT'S REALLY *HIM!*

SUNNY & CLEAR

MAN AND GOBLIN

SOOTH, BUT I HAD *DREADED* THIS!

GEE, I HATE TO *BOTHER* YOU OR ANYTHING-- BUT CAN I HAVE YOUR *AUTOGRAPH*, MR. THOR?

IT WOULD REALLY MEAN A *LOT* TO ME!

YOU CAN SIGN THE PAGE RIGHT AFTER *BILLY CARTER*... AND COULD YOU MAKE IT OUT TO *SALLY JANE*?

AYE, CHILD--'TWILL BE MY *PLEASURE!*

WHEN YOU'RE *DONE*, COULD YOU LET LITTLE JIMMY TOUCH YOUR *HAMMER* MISTER?

HE'S A BIG *FAN* OF YOURS!

AH, THOR'S *OKAY*-- BUT HE'S NOT HALF AS NEAT AS *IRON MAN!*

AND SO IT GOES, UNTIL...

FORGIVE ME, GOOD CITIZENS-- BUT I FEAR I MUST TAKE MY *LEAVE* NOW!

THE CLARION CALL TO *DUTY* HATH BEEN *SOUNDED*--

--AND THE *SON OF ODIN*, AS EVER, MUST *ANSWER!*

THOUGH METHINKS THERE ARE TIMES I WOULD RATHER FACE AN *ARMY* OF MY FIERCEST *FOES* THAN A CROWD OF MY MOST ARDENT *ADMIRERS!*

AND SOON, IN A SECLUDED **ALLEY**...

STILL, WHEN THE **BURDENS** OF THE THUNDER GOD DOTH GROW TOO **GREAT**--

--I HAVE BUT TO **STRIKE** THE MYSTIC MALLET **MJOLNIR** ONCE UPON THE GROUND...

...AND THUS ALLOW ALMIGHTY ODIN'S **ENCHANT-MENT** TO TRANS-FORM ME ONCE MORE INTO...

HEY-- **WHUZZAT**?!?

WHAT'S **GOIN'ON** AROUND HERE?

CAN'T A BODY EVER TAKE A NAP IN **PEACE**?

WELL, EXCUSE **ME**, MADAM-- I HAD NO IDEA THIS ALLEY WAS ALREADY **TAKEN**!

I MEAN--EVEN A **DERELICT** HAS HERSELF **SOME** RIGHTS, Y'KNOW!

WELL, IT **IS**! YA WANNA **SACK OUT** SOME-PLACE, MISTER-- FIND YERSELF ANUDDER **ALLEY**!

BY THE WAY... KIN YA SPARE SOME **CHANGE**?

AFRAID I'M FRESH OUT OF **COIN**, MY DEAR-- BUT WILL **THIS** HELP?

CONSIDER IT **MY** SHARE OF THE **RENT**!

BLESS YA, MISTER-- I'LL R'MEMBER YA IN MY **WILL** FER THIS!

AS I WAS **SAYING**...

WHEN THINGS GET TOO HARRIED FOR **THOR**, HE ALWAYS HAS THE MORTAL **DR. DON BLAKE** TO FALL BACK ON--

--AND FRANKLY, I **LOVE** IT!

WHILE, IN A MYSTERIOUS SANCTUARY **ELSEWHERE**...

WH-WHO **ARE** YOU? WHY HAVE YOU **BROUGHT** ME HERE?

WE **ASSURE** YOU, WILBUR DAY... ANSWERS WILL BE **FORTHCOMING**!

H-HOW DO YOU KNOW MY **NAME**?

WH-WHERE **ARE** YOU? BLAST IT--- **SHOW** YOURSELF!!

WE KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU THERE **IS** TO KNOW, WILBUR--

--JUST AS **YOU** SHALL KNOW ALL ABOUT **US**... IN GOOD TIME!

WE FREED YOU FROM YOUR **PRISON CELL*** BECAUSE WE BELIEVED WE COULD BE OF CONSIDERABLE **ASSISTANCE** TO ONE ANOTHER, WILBUR!

YOU AREN'T GOING TO **DISAPPOINT** US NOW, ARE YOU?

IF HE **DOES**... I SHALL GLADLY **DESTROY** HIM!!

*LAST ISH.--LEN.

NO, MY FRIEND, I'M CERTAIN THAT WILL NOT BE **NECESSARY**... **WILL** IT, WILBUR?

NOW I SUGGEST YOU DON YOUR SPECIAL **HYDRAULIC ARMOR**, WILBUR-- SO THAT YOU CAN ONCE MORE BECOME YOUR AWESOME **ALTER-EGO**...

...THE DREADED **STILT-MAN!!**

MY **COSTUME**--!?! BUT WHAT ARE **YOU** DOING WITH IT?

I THOUGHT IT HAD BEEN **DESTROYED** IN MY BATTLE WITH **BLACK GOLIATH**!*

INDEED-- BUT THIS IS **NOT** YOUR **ORIGINAL** ARMOR, WILBUR DAY!

*IN **CHAMPIONS*** 12.--LEN AGAIN.

THE ARMOR YOU SEE BEFORE YOU IS A **DUPLICATE** OF YOUR HYDRAULIC SUIT, CONSTRUCTED OF A SPECIAL **ADAMANTIUM ALLOY**--

--AND DESIGNED TO MAKE YOU ALL BUT **INVINCIBLE!**

YOU'RE **RIGHT!** I'VE NEVER **FELT** SUCH A SENSE OF **ABSOLUTE POWER!**

OKAY, WHOEVER YOU ARE-- YOU WANT SOMETHING **DONE**, I'M YOUR **MAN!**

WE NEVER **DOUBTED** THAT, STILT-MAN! NOW LISTEN **CLOSELY**-- AND I'LL EXPLAIN YOUR **ASSIGNMENT!**

AND IF YOU VALUE YOUR **LIFE**, LITTLE MAN--

--YOU WILL NOT **FAIL!!**

AND WHEN THE STILT-MAN HAS BEEN GIVEN HIS **INSTRUCTIONS...**

WHAT YOU'RE PLANNING IS **BIZARRE**, TO SAY THE LEAST, MISTER--

--BUT IF **ANYONE** CAN PULL IT OFF, IT'S **ME!**

I'M **LEAVING** NOW! I WILL **RETURN** WHEN THE JOB IS **DONE!!**

AND THOUGH YOU WILL NOT **KNOW** IT, I WILL BE **WITH** YOU, LITTLE MAN--

--WAITING TO **SLAY** YOU AT THE FIRST SIGN OF **BETRAYAL!**

ELSEWHERE, SOON AFTER...

...SO THE FAT MAN SAYS, "THAT WAS NO *LADLE*, THAT WAS MY *KNIFE!*"

NOT *FUNNY*, FRED.

WHAT DO YA *WANT* FOR THESE PRICES, JOE -- *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO*?

YA THINK A LITTLE *PEACE AN' QUIET* WOULD BE TOO MUCH TO ASK?

SHEESH! EVERYBODY IS A *CRITIC!*

BLANG! BLANG!

EXIT

HUH? HEY, YOU *EXPECTIN'* ANYBODY, FRED?

THAT SUPPOSED TO BE A *JOKE*, JOE?

IT STARTED OUT THAT WAY-- BUT MAYBE I BETTER GO *CHECK!*

FRED, Y-YOU AIN'T GONNA *BELIEVE* THIS -- BUT THERE *IS* A MAN OUT HERE...

...A MAN HALF-A-MILE HIGH!!

NOT JUST *ANY* MAN, YOU GIBBERING IDIOT--

-- BUT THE NEW, IMPROVED *STILT-MAN!!*

I'VE COME TO COLLECT THE SPECIAL *CARGO* YOU'RE CARRYING, CRETIN--

--AND IF YOU'RE *WISE*, YOU'LL LET ME *HAVE* IT!

WHANG!

OH, I'LL LET YA *HAVE* IT AL'RIGHT, SMART-GUY--

--BUT *NOT* THE WAY YOU *EXPECTED* IT!

YOU AIN'T WHACKIN' *ME* AGAINST A BULKHEAD LIKE YA DID *JOE!*

BUT I HAVE NO *NEED* TO, FOOL--

-- SO LONG AS MY NEW COSTUME CAN EMIT STUPIFYING-- *GAS!!*

HSSSS

C-CAN'T *BREATHE--!!*

UUNNHH!!

THIS IS WHAT MY MYSTERIOUS BENEFACTOR SENT ME TO *RETRIEVE--*

--THIS HEAVILY-ARMORED *BOX*, SEALED WITH SPECIAL *ELECTRON-LOCKS!*

I HAVE NO IDEA *WHAT* THIS BOX *CONTAINS--*

--NOR AM I LIKELY TO *FIND OUT* RIGHT NOW!

WITH ITS PILOTS *UNCONSCIOUS*, THE HELICOPTER IS BEGINNING TO WHIRL *OUT-OF-CONTROL...*

...WHICH MEANS IT'S TIME FOR ME TO *DEPART!*

...AS A MONSTROUS FIGURE FOLLOWS SILENTLY *BEHIND!*

SEVERAL BLOCKS AWAY, DR. DON BLAKE THREADS HIS WAY CAREFULLY THRU THE **RUSH HOUR THRONG**, COMPLETELY IMMERSED IN **THOUGHT**...

TO **WORK** OR **NOT** TO WORK... THAT'S ESSENTIALLY THE **QUESTION!**

EITHER I **ACCEPT** JACOB WALLABY'S OFFER TO PRACTICE AT THAT **FREE CLINIC**--OR I SIT AROUND **TWIDDLING MY THUMBS!**

NOT EXACTLY THE MOST **EXCITING** OF CHOICES, IS IT?

WELL, IF YOU'D LIKE A **THIRD** ALTERNATIVE, DOCTOR-- HOW ABOUT **THIS**?

HUH? THAT **SOUND**--! WHAT IS...?

LORD--**NO!!**

WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP

THAT **HELICOPTER**-- HURTLING **OUT OF CONTROL**--!!

IT'S GOING TO **PLUNGE** STRAIGHT INTO THIS **CROWD**...

...**UNLESS**...

...THE **SON OF ODIN** HATH POWER ENOW TO **AVERT** THIS IMPENDING **DISASTER!**

WITH A SOUND LIKE ROLLING **THUNDER**, THE MIGHTY THOR AND THE RAMPANT AIRCRAFT **COLLIDE** IN MID-AIR--

KWA-VOOM!

--THE SHEER **IMPACT** OF IT MOMENTARILY **NUMBING** THE THUNDER GOD'S MUSCLES, **STUNNING** HIS VERY **SENSES**...

...BUT STILL, USING HIS OWN **BODY** AS A BUFFER, THE ODINSON MANAGES TO **LOWER** THE STRICKEN HELICOPTER RELATIVELY **GENTLY** TO A JUTTING **ROOFTOP**--

--AS THE TERRIFIED **CROWD** BELOW STOPS SCURRYING FOR **SHELTER**, AND BREATHES A COLLECTIVE SIGH OF **RELIEF**!

AND WHEN THOR HAS PULLED THE STILL-DAZED PILOTS TO **SAFETY**...

THOU SHALT **RECOVER**, MORTAL-- BUT WHAT **CAUSED** THY SUDDEN PLIGHT?

IT WAS... THE **STILT-MAN**!

H-HE **ROBBED** US... THEN LEFT US TO **DIE**!

THE **STILT-MAN**, THOU SAYEST? CAPTAIN AMERICA HATH **TOLD** ME OF THE FIEND! *

FEAR **NOT**, GOOD MORTAL! THY CARGO SHALL BE **RECOVERED**-- AND **THOU** SHALT BE **AVENGED**!

SO SWEARS THE **GOD OF THUNDER**!!

*CAP BATTLED STILTY BACK IN **CAPTAIN AMERICA** #191. -- LEN.

AND IN THE **SHADOWS**, A GROTESQUE FIGURE ANGRILY CLENCHES HIS MASSIVE **FIST**--

--AND MUTTERS A SILENT **CURSE**!

WHILE, SOMEWHERE **BEYOND** TIME AND SPACE, **FANDRAL** THE DASHING, **HOGUN** THE GRIM, AND THE VOLUMINOUS **VOLSTAGG** RECEIVE A HEROES' WELCOME UPON THEIR TRIUMPHANT **RETURN** TO IMMORTAL ASGARD...

...WHERE WE'RE INVITED TO JOIN THE **CELEBRATION!**

VERILY, THOU ART **TOO KIND**, GOOD CITIZENS--

-- THOUGH, IN TRUTH, WE MUST MODESTLY ADMIT THY PRAISE IS **WELL-DESERVED!**

THY **HUMILITY** IS ONLY OUT-SHADOWED BY THY **WAISTLINE**, VAST ONE!

AND SOON, IN THE THRONE-ROOM OF THE **PALACE IMPERIAL**...

HAIL, ALMIGHTY **ODIN!** AS ORDERED, WE HAVE **CAPTURED** THE TRAITOROUS SNAYKAR, MAGRAT, AND KRODA*--

--AND NOW AWAIT THY NEXT **COMMAND!**

THOU HAST DONE **WELL**, GOOD WARRIORS! ASK ANY **BOON** OF ME-- AND IT IS **THINE!**

THEN PERHAPS A SIMPLE **REPAST**, MILORD... SAY, FIFTEEN OR SIXTEEN **COURSES**...?

NEVER **FEAR**, O LION OF ASGARD-- THY BELLY SHALL BE **FILLED!**

BUT FIRST, ALLOW ME TO OFFER SOME **SUSTENANCE** FOR THY **SOUL!**

THY VOICE DOTH SOUND **TROUBLED**, MY LIEGE! IF THERE BE SOME WAY WE WARRIORS THREE CAN **AID** THEE--

--PRAY THEE, BUT **SPEAK**-- AND WE SHALL **OBEY!**

THY **FEALTY** DOES ME **HONOR**, DASHING ONE!

FOR, INDEED, ALL IS NOT **WELL** WITH THE **REALM ETERNAL**--

--AND MAYHAP ONLY YE **THREE** CAN SET THINGS **A'RIGHT!**

AND, ON THAT RATHER *TANTALIZING* NOTE, WE MUST RELUCTANTLY *RETURN* TO THE BIG APPLE...

STASHING MY STOLEN PRIZE IN MY *BACK-PACK* LEAVES MY *HANDS* FREE FOR OTHER THINGS!

IT'S A TRIFLE *UN-COMFORTABLE*...

...BUT IN THIS IMPROVED *ARMOR*, I BARELY *FEEL* THE EXTRA WEIGHT--AND THE BUILT-IN *GYROSCOPIC STABILIZERS* WILL KEEP ME *ERECT* UNDER ANY...

EH?

THAT *WHIZZING* SOUND-- COMING RIGHT *TOWARD* ME--!

BETTER RETRACT MY *LEG-UNITS* BEFORE...

BLAST! I *RECOGNIZE* THAT HAMMER--!!

IT BELONGS TO THAT CURSED *AVENGER*--

"--THOR!!"

THOU DOST *MOVE* FAR MORE *SWIFTLY* THAN I WOULD E'ER HAVE *EXPECTED*, TOWERING ONE--

--BUT STILL THOU ART NO *MATCH* FOR HIM WHO WIELDS THE MYSTIC MALLET *MJOLNIR!*

THAT REMAINS TO BE *SEEN*, THUNDER GOD--

--AND PERHAPS MY *ROCKET-PODS* CAN *PROVE* MY POINT!!

FWHOOSH!!

FWHOOSH!!

BY HELA! HIS ROCKET-PODS DOTH FIRE HIGH-INTENSITY CONCUSSION-CHARGES!!

WERE I ANYONE BUT AN ASGARDIAN BORN, THE IMPACT WOULD HAVE SLAIN ME!

KWA-VAM!

BUT EVEN THE GOD OF THUNDER CANNOT ENDURE SUCH DEVASTATING FIRE-POWER FOR LONG WITHOUT SUFFERING GRIEVOUS INJURY!

WHUMP!

WHUMP!

WHUMP!

WHUMP!

SKRAKT

THUS, BY THE STRENGTH OF MY SINEWS -- I SHALL ENDURE IT NO LONGER!!

MILES AWAY, THE RAGING BATTLE CAN BE **WITNESSED** ON A HOLOGRAPHIC **VIEW-SCREEN** MOUNTED UPON ONE WALL OF A TOWERING **COMPUTER**--

--WHICH CAREFULLY STUDIES EVERY **MOVE** THE TWO COMBATANTS **MAKE**...

...CALCULATING **ODDS**...WEIGHING **ALTERNATIVES**...

...UNTIL, AT LAST, A **DECISION** IS REACHED...

...AND A SERIES OF **ANTI-NEUTRINOS** RACE THROUGH THE MONSTROUS MECHANISM WITH QUITE **LITERALLY** THE SPEED OF **THOUGHT**!

THE **STILT-MAN** WILL NOT BE ABLE TO **DEAL** WITH THE UNEXPECTED INTERVENTION OF THE BEING CALLED **THOR**!

THE TIME HAS COME TO INSTITUTE MORE **SERIOUS** PRECAUTIONS--

--NO MATTER **WHO** MAY SUFFER AS A **RESULT**!!

MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE HARD-WAGED **WAR**...

THOSE ARE THE **LAST** OF THY DEADLY **MISSILES**, STILT-MAN!

THUS THE TIME FOR ME TO DO NAUGHT BUT **DEFEND** MYSELF IS **ENDED**--

WHOOM!

WHOOM!

--AND THE TIME FOR THEE TO DEFEND **THYSELF** AT LAST IS **NIGH**!!

KRANG!

YOUR **HAMMER** IS AN AWESOME **WEAPON**, THUNDER GOD-- BUT **NOTHING** CAN HARM A MAN ENCASED IN **ADAMANTIUM ARMOR**...

...A MAN WHO CAN CHANGE HIS VERY **HEIGHT** WITH THE SPEED OF **THOUGHT**!

BY ODIN! HE GREW SO **SWIFTLY**, THE MOMENTUM HURLED ME **AWAY**--!

BUT **DESPITE** MY POWER, BATTLING A LIVING **GOD** MAY STILL BE ULTIMATELY **BEYOND** ME!

THE **RECOIL** OF MY SUDDEN ASCENSION HURLED THOR SEVERAL **BLOCKS** FROM HERE--

--AND SINCE I ALREADY **HAVE** WHAT I WAS **SENT** HERE FOR--

--PERHAPS I'D BE WISE TO BEAT A DIPLOMATIC **RETREAT**!

BUT, SEVERAL BLOCKS AHEAD, IN A **VACANT LOT** DIRECTLY IN THE STILT-MAN'S **PATH**...

IN HIS **HASTE**, THE TOWERING ONE DOTH NOT **REALIZE** HE STRIDES **TOWARDS** ME--

--AND ERE HE CAN **CORRECT** HIS ERROR, ENCHANTED **MJOLNIR** SHALL PLACE AN INSURMOUNTABLE **OBSTACLE** BEFORE HIM...

THOOM!

"...A YAWNING PIT TOO **DEEP** FOR EVEN THE STILT-MAN'S EVER-EXTENDING **LIMBS** TO OVERCOME!"

BUT SUDDENLY, **AMAZINGLY**...

EH?

SPINES SUDDENLY SPRANG FROM MY STILT TO STOP MY **FALL**... BUT WHERE DID THEY **COME** FROM?

MY COSTUME NEVER POSSESSED THAT POWER **BEFORE**, AND I NEVER...

NO! I TURNED TO **MOVE**--BUT I **CAN'T!** I'M LOSING **CONTROL** OVER MY **ARMOR!**

IT'S PROPELLING ME RIGHT **AT** THE THUNDER GOD--

--AND **WORSE**, IT'S TRYING TO **KILL** HIM!!

STOP ME, THOR! SOMEHOW, YOU'VE GOT TO **STOP** ME!!

BELIEVE ME, TOWERING ONE...

...'TWILL BE MY **PLEASURE!!**

THWANGG!

NO, YOU FOOL-- NOT **THAT** WAY! MY ARMOR COMES EQUIPPED WITH SPECIAL **GYRO-STABILIZERS!**

EVEN IF YOUR HAMMER BENDS MY STILTS ALMOST **DOUBLE**--

--IT'S ONLY GOING TO SPRING BACK *UPRIGHT* ONCE MORE...

...AND *SLAM* YOU DOWN INTO THE *STREET!!*

AYE, STILT-MAN-- BUT SO *DOING*, THOU HAST HANDED ME THE MEANS TO ULTIMATELY *DEFEAT* THEE!

FOR, I NEED BUT STRIKE THE ENCHANTED MJOLNIR *TWICE* UPON THE *GROUND*...

THOK THOK!...

"...TO SUMMON THE FULL UNFETTERED *FURY* OF THE RAGING *STORM* WHICH IS MY *BIRTHRIGHT!*"

SHA-RAKKT!

AND, WITH THE PLATINUM WIRING OF HIS ADAMANTIUM ARMOR COMPLETELY *FUSED* BY THE SUDDEN LIGHTNING STRIKE, THE STILT-MAN ALMOST GRATEFULLY *COLLAPSES* IN AN UNTIDY *HEAP!*

TRULY, THOU ART A MIGHTY *FOE*, STILT-MAN--

--BUT THE POWER OF *JUSTICE* IS MIGHTIER BY *FAR* THAN...

AARRGGHH!!

WHA-BOOM!

THAT *FIRST* BLAST WAS ONLY A *DEMONSTRATION,* FOOL-- SOMETHING TO SHOW HOW *LITTLE* YOUR POWER--*STILT-MAN'S* POWER--AND THE POWER OF YOUR PRECIOUS *JUSTICE*--MEAN AGAINST POWER SUCH AS *MINE!*

THE POWER OF--

BLASTAAR, THE LIVING BOMB-BURST!!

THE BEHEMOTH STANDS 'TWIXT *ME* AND MINE ENCHANTED *HAMMER--*

--AND IF MJOLNIR IS NOT *RETURNED* TO MY GRASP WITHIN *60 SECONDS,* I SHALL REVERT TO THE MORTAL *DON BLAKE...*

...AND THEN, SURELY I SHALL *DIE!!*

NEXT ISSUE: MINUTE OF MADNESS...DARK DAY OF DOOM!

BE HERE, OKAY?

THOR ®

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THE MIGHTY

THOR®

UNLESS I REGAIN MY *MYSTIC HAMMER* WITHIN SIXTY SECONDS, I AM *DOOMED*--

--BUT THE EXPLOSIVE FURY OF **BLASTAAR** WILL NOT LET ME *NEAR* IT!

LAY DOWN AND *DIE*, ASGARDIAN! TODAY IS **MINE!**

When lame Dr. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic mallet MJOLNIR—and Blake is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm and the Lightning, Heir to the Throne of Immortal Asgard...

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!™

LEN WEIN ✶ WALT SIMONSON & TONY DeZUNIGA ✶ GLYNIS WEIN ✶ JOE ROSEN
WRITER/EDITOR | ARTISTS / STORYTELLERS | COLORIST | LETTERER

A MINUTE of MADNESS... DARK DAY of DOOM!

LAY DOWN AND *DIE*, GOLDEN-HAIR!

YOU DON'T STAND A *CHANCE* AGAINST-- **BLASTAAR** *THE LIVING BOMB-BURST!!*

WHOOM!

NAY, MONSTROUS ONE! IF I CAN BUT *GRASP* MINE ENCHANTED *HAMMER* ONCE MORE, I CAN...

UUNNHH!!

C-693

FOOL! I'VE SEEN WHAT YOUR CURSED WEAPON DID TO THE BLUNDERING STILT-MAN!*

THERE IS NO WAY I'LL LET YOU LAY HANDS UPON IT AGAIN!!

BY ASGARD! HIS EXPLOSIVE PUNCH HATH SET MINE HEAD TO REELING!

AND YET, I MUST NOT SUCCUMB TO BLASTAAR'S SAVAGE ASSAULT!

*LAST ISSUE, RIGHT? --LEN.

FOR ALMIGHTY ODIN HATH DECREED THAT, IF I AM SEPARATED FROM ENCHANTED MJOLNIR FOR MORE THAN SIXTY SECONDS--

--I AM INSTANTLY TRANSFORMED ONCE MORE INTO THE MORTAL DR. DON BLAKE, WHO WOULD NOT HAVE A PRAYER AGAINST BLASTAAR'S POWER!

FIFTEEN SECONDS HATH ALREADY PASSED--

--AND IF I HOPE TO SURVIVE THIS FURIOUS CONFLICT--

--I MUST ACT SWIFTLY-- OR SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES!

SKRAKKT

UPROOTING THE *STREET* WILL NOT *KEEP* ME FROM YOU, GOLDEN-HAIR!

NOTHING WILL KEEP ME FROM YOU *NOW!!*

'TWAS NOT A WALL OF SHATTERED *CONCRETE* I SOUGHT TO PLACE BETWEEN US, MONSTROUS ONE--

-- BUT RATHER AN OVERPOWERING TORRENT OF SURGING *WATER!!*

MAYHAP 'TWILL SERVE TO *DOUSE* THE SAVAGE *FIRES* WHICH RAGE WITHIN THEE!

AARRGGHH!!

...AND THE PRECIOUS *SECONDS* KEEP ON *TICKING AWAY!*

BAH! THERE IS NOT A BEING THAT *LIVES* WHO CAN HUMILIATE *BLASTAAR* LIKE THIS WITHOUT *SUFFERING* FOR IT A *THOUSANDFOLD*--

--AND, GOLDEN-HAIR, THAT INCLUDES *YOU!!*

THROOM!

CAUGHT FLAT-FOOTED BY THE AWESOME **EX-PLOSIONS** WHICH LANCE FROM BLASTAAR'S VERY **FINGERTIPS**, THE BATTERED THOR IS HURLED VIOLENTLY BACK INTO A SHADOW-STREWN **ALLEYWAY**...

THUD!

...MERE INSTANTS BEFORE THOSE FATE-FUL **SIXTY SECONDS** HAVE FINALLY **PASSED!**

THUS, WHEN THE LIVING BOMB-BURST LUMBERS **INTO** THE ALLEY MOMENTS **LATER**...

COME **OUT**, GOLDEN-HAIR-- **SHOW** YOURSELF!

THERE IS NO WAY YOU CAN **HIDE** YOURSELF FROM...

EH?

THE **THUNDER GOD**-- HE'S **VANISHED!?!**

THERE IS NO ONE IN THIS ALLEY BUT ANOTHER FRAIL *HUMAN!*

WHERE **IS** HE, WORM? TELL ME WHERE THE GOLDEN-HAIRED ONE HAS **GONE** OR...

NO-- **DON'T!**

H-HE RAN **PAST** ME-- OVER THAT **FENCE!!**

BAH! ONCE OVER THAT FENCE, THE COWARD COULD HAVE FLED IN *COUNTLESS* DIRECTIONS-- AND I HAVE NO MORE TIME TO *WASTE* HERE!

I MUST *FULFILL* THE MASTER'S *MISSION*!!

KRANG!

UUNFF!!

MAN, THAT'S ABOUT AS *CLOSE* AS I EVER WANT TO *CUT* IT!

IF BLASTAAR HAD REACHED THIS ALLEY A FEW SECONDS *SOONER*, HE WOULD HAVE *SEEN* ME CHANGE BACK INTO *DON BLAKE!*

AT THAT SAME SECOND, MY *HAMMER* WAS ALSO TRANSFORMED INTO A SIMPLE WOODEN *WALKING STICK*--

--AND NOW THAT BLASTAAR IS *GONE*, I CAN QUIETLY *RECOVER* MY CANE...

...UNLESS, OF COURSE, SOMEBODY *ELSE* FINDS IT *FIRST!*

THAT IS SOME FINE PIECE OF *WOOD* THERE, BROTHER HONCHO!

SURE *IS*, FOXY LADY!

MAKES A GOOD *SCEPTRE* FO' THE PRESIDENT O' THE *STREET KINGS*, DON'T IT?

FELLA? UH-- *EXCUSE* ME, FELLA.

YO' TALKIN' T' *ME*, JACK?

YES, THAT--AH-- *STICK* YOU'RE CARRYING... I'M AFRAID IT'S *MINE!*

DO **TELL**...AN' JUST WHUT YO' 'SPECT ME T' **DO** 'BOUT THAT, HUH?

WELL, I--UH-- **WAS** SORT OF HOPING YOU'D GIVE IT **BACK!**

YO' DON'T **SAY**?

WELL, I COULD ADD **PLEASE!**

DON'T **BOTHER!**

YO' **HEAR** THAT, BROTHERS? THE LITTLE DUDE WANTS HIS **STICK** BACK!

WELL, HE GONNA **GET** IT BACK, OKAY-- RIGHT UPSIDE HIS STUPID **HEAD!!**

WHAT--?!?

*INSTINCTIVELY, BLAKE REACHES OUT TO **GRAB** THE FLAILING STAFF--AND THE INSTANT IT TOUCHES HIS **HAND** THERE COMES A BLINDING FLASH OF SUPERNAL LIGHT WHICH SIGNALS AN AWE-SOME **TRANSFORMATION**...*

*...AND THE STREET PUNK CALLED **BROTHER HONCHO** SUDDENLY FINDS HIS NEWFOUND **SCEPTRE** HAS BECOME FAR TOO **HEAVY** FOR HIM TO **HOLD!***

*HIS "**SCEPTRE**" AND HIS **JAW** STRIKE THE CEMENT AT PRECISELY THE SAME **SECOND!***

SWEET MAMA... **FORGIVE** ME.

*AND ON THAT MOST **APOLOGETIC** NOTE, THE FINAL MEETING OF THE ONCE-ARROGANT **STREET KINGS** COMES TO A RATHER FRANTIC **ENDING!***

BLASTAAR HATH *FLED*-- BUT THE DEFEATED STILT-MAN YET *REMAINS!*

MAYHAP *HE* CAN GIVE *MEANING* TO THIS DAY'S *MADNESS!*

STILT-MAN, I WOULD HAVE *WORDS* WITH THEE!

VERILY, THOU SHALT TELL ME THE *REASONS* BEHIND THINE ACTIONS, OR...

N-NO-- KEEP *AWAY!* I'LL TELL YOU ANYTHING-- *ANYTHING!!*

AND ONCE THE TERRIFIED VILLAIN HAS STAMMERED OUT EVERYTHING HE **KNOWS**, A MAJESTIC FIGURE IS SOON HURTLING HIGH OVER THE SPRAWLING LONG ISLAND INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX CALLED **STARK INTERNATIONAL**--

--WHERE HE STANDS, AT LAST, BEFORE THE MAN **RESPONSIBLE** FOR THIS TECHNOLOGICAL WONDER-LAND: **TONY STARK** HIMSELF!

THOR! IT'S GOOD TO ***SEE*** YOU AGAIN, AVENGER!

IS THERE SOMETHING IN PARTICULAR I CAN ***DO*** FOR YOU?

AYE, MY FRIEND-- FOR I SEEK ***INFORMATION*** ONLY THINE ALL-KNOWING ***COMPUTERS*** CAN POSSIBLY ***SUPPLY*** ME!

THEN LET'S HEAD OVER TO THE ***DATA CONTROL CENTER,*** THUNDER GOD--

--AND YOU CAN FILL ME IN ON ALL THE ***DETAILS*** ALONG THE ***WAY!***

APPARENTLY, STILT-MAN WAS FREED FROM *PRISON* BY THE CREATURE CALLED *BLASTAAR*, SO THAT HE MIGHT *STEAL* SOMETHING FOR BLASTAAR'S MYSTERIOUS *MASTER!*

ANYTHING IN *PARTICULAR?*

AYE--A UNIQUE METALLIC *CHEST*, CONTAINING *RADIO-ACTIVE ISOTOPES!* HE TOOK IT FROM A *HELI-COPTER* AS IT FLEW O'ER THE *CITY!*

STILT-MAN HAS *STYLE*, WHAT HAPPENED TO *BLASTAAR?*

UNFORTUNATELY, HE *FLED*... AFTER PRYING THAT METALLIC *CHEST* FROM STILT-MAN'S VERY *FINGERS!*

NATURALLY. HOW ABOUT BLASTY'S *BOSS*-- ANY *CLUES*?

ONLY THAT HIS *LAIR* DOTH APPEAR TO BE A RUINED *FACTORY* OF SOME SORT, HIDDEN SOMEWHERE IN UPSTATE *NEW YORK*--

--A FACTORY CONSTRUCTED ALMOST ENTIRELY OF A SPECIAL *ADAMANTIUM ALLOY!*

A *FACTORY*, EH? THAT SOUNDS HAUNTINGLY *FAMILIAR!*

I'LL PUNCH WHAT YOU'VE *TOLD* ME--PLUS A FEW THOUGHTS OF MY *OWN*--INTO THE PRIMARY *MAGNETIC NET-WORK MEMORY CO-ORDINATOR...*

...AND THEN WE'LL JUST SEE WHAT *DEVELOPS!*

AND, IN SECONDS WHAT ***DEVELOPS*** *IS...*

F.A.U.S.T.

FULLY-AUTOMATED UNIT OF STRUCTURAL TECHNOLOGY

SECTION I: BACKGROUND

SUB-SECTION A: ORIGIN

BUDDY, YOU'VE HIT THE *JACKPOT!*

CLICK!

F.A.U.S.T.--THE WORLD'S FIRST FULLY-AUTOMATED FACTORY-- WAS THE BRAINCHILD OF PROFESSOR PAXTON PENTECOST...

PENTECOST CLAIMED HIS CREATION WAS TOTALLY SELF-SUFFICIENT...THAT IT WOULD NEVER NEED REPAIR...WOULD NEVER GROW OBSOLETE...

UNFORTUNATELY, THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY WAS GIVEN NO TIME TO TEST THE VALIDITY OF PENTE-COST'S CLAIMS...

CLICK!

PENTECOST IS NOW SERVING TIME IN FEDERAL PRISON...

CLICK!

...FOR THE ATTEMPTED MURDER OF HIS EX-PARTNER, MILLIONAIRE INDUSTRIALIST FERGUSON BLAINE...

CLICK!

...WHILE HIS CREATION IS ONLY A SHATTERED RUIN...THE RESULT OF AN ISOLATED HOLOCAUST WHOSE CAUSE IS YET UNKNOWN...

THEN 'TWOULD SEEM THIS ***RUIN*** DOTH BE MY DESTINATION, FRIEND STARK.

IT'S CERTAINLY YOUR BEST BET AT THE ***MOMENT***, THOR.

EVERYTHING SEEMS TO MATCH UP ***PERFECTLY*** WITH WHAT YOU ***TOLD*** ME.

THEN I SHALL BID THEE ***FAREWELL***, MY FRIEND-- AND TAKE MY ***LEAVE***.

DO YOU WANT ***IRON MAN*** TO COME ALONG ***WITH*** YOU, PAL?

NAY--WHAT MUST NEXT BE ***DONE***, THOR MUST DO ***ALONE!***

WELL, TAKE ***CARE*** OF YOURSELF, AVENGER--

--AND IF IT TURNS OUT YOU ***DO*** NEED MY HELP, DON'T HESITATE TO...

...ASK?

MEANWHILE...

I HAVE *RETURNED*, MASTER-- WITH THAT WHICH YOU *DESIRED*!

THE INCOMPETENT STILT-MAN *FAILED* YOU-- AS I *KNEW* HE WOULD!

BUT *BLASTAAR* DID NOT FAIL!

BLASTAAR *NEVER* FAILS!!

FOR BLASTAAR IS *POWER INCARNATE!!!*

THAT IS WHY I FIRST **BROUGHT** YOU HERE TO ME, BLASTAAR...

--FOR THERE IS NO ONE WHO KNOWS YOUR POWER **BETTER** THAN I WHO WAS CODE-NAMED **FAUST**...

...I WHO WAS ONCE YOUR **VICTIM**.

HAD I KNOWN OF *YOUR* GREAT POWER THEN, MASTER-- I WOULD NEVER HAVE ACTED SO *RASHLY*!

THAT IS WHY I *SERVE* YOU NOW-- TO MAKE *AMENDS* FOR MY PAST *INDISCRETIONS*!

BUT STILL I DO NOT *UNDERSTAND* WHY YOU REQUIRED THIS SIMPLE *CHEST*?

THEN PERMIT ME TO EXPLAIN IN GREATER *DETAIL*, BLASTAAR!

LOOK *CLOSELY*... AND BEHOLD AN APOCALYPTIC VISION OF TRANSCENDANT *FURY*!

NO! IT IS *THEM*-- THE TWO BEINGS I HATE *MOST* IN ALL THIS *WORLD*!!

INDEED! THEY ARE THE SO-CALLED **HUMAN TORCH**... AND THE BEHEMOTH KNOWN AS THE **HULK!**

I SEE YOU **REMEMBER!**

I WILL NEVER **FORGET!**

NOR WILL **I!**

FOR IT WAS ONLY THEIR TIMELY **INTER-VENTION** WHICH PREVENTED MY COMPLETE AND UTTER **DESTRUCTION** AT YOUR **HANDS!**

WITH HIS AWESOME STRENGH, THE HULK **ENCASED** YOU IN MY ADAMANTIUM SHIELDING... AND HURLED YOU INTO THE **ATLANTIC OCEAN!** *

*BACK IN **MARVEL TEAM-UP** #18 --LEN.

SO? MUCH HAS HAPPENED **SINCE** THEN, MASTER! WHY RECALL AN UNPLEASANT **PAST?**

MERELY TO **COUNTER-POINT** YOUR PROMISED **FUTURE!**

BEHOLD THAT WHICH YOU SHALL **BECOME** WHEN YOU HAVE FAITHFULLY FULFILLED MY **COMMANDS**--!

BEHOLD YOURSELF AS YOU HAVE ALWAYS **WANTED** TO BE--

--AS **KING** OF THE SAVAGE **NEGATIVE ZONE** WHICH SPAWNED YOU!

AYE, THAT HAS BEEN MY **DREAM** SINCE... **EH?**

ANOTHER IMAGE **SUPER-CEDES** MINE-- BUT **WHO?!?**

IT IS THE BEING CALLED **THOR!** EVEN NOW, HE **APPROACHES** US!

HE *DARES*? THE UNMITI-GATED *FOOL*!!

THIS TIME I WILL *DESTROY* HIM!!

BLASTAAR, MY CHEST...?

IT IS *YOURS*, MASTER!

ALL *I* DESIRE NOW IS-- *VENGEANCE*!!

BY HELA! 'TIS EVEN MORE *TERRIBLE* HERE THAN TONY STARK'S COMPUTERS DID *DESCRIBE* IT!

BAH! YOU WILL SOON *LEARN*, GOLDEN-HAIR, THAT THERE IS *NOTHING* MORE TERRIBLE THAN THE BATTLE-FURY OF *BLASTAAR*!!

AND IT IS A *LESSON* WHICH WILL COST YOU YOUR *LIFE*!!

AARRGGHH!!

BLASTAAR RESPONDED PRECISELY AS I *PREDICTED* HE WOULD!

NOW, WHILE HE KEEPS THE THUNDER GOD *OCCUPIED*, I MUST PROCEED WITH MY *FINAL PREPARATIONS*!

THOU ART TERRIBLE *INDEED*, MONSTROUS ONE--

--BUT STILL ART THOU NO *MATCH* FOR A *WARRIOR BORN!*

NO! HE ELUDED MY *POWER BURST*--BY LEAPING RIGHT *OVER* ME!

AYE, VARLET--AND EVEN AS THOU DOST WHIRL TO FACE ME *ANEW*...

I SHALL PUT AN *END* TO THY VILE THREATS-- *FOREVER!!*

BROK!

YOU AND YOUR CURSED *HAMMER!* I SHOULD HAVE *DESTROYED* IT WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE DURING OUR *EARLIER* ENCOUNTER--

--BUT THAT IS A *MISTAKE* I CAN STILL *RECTIFY!!*

THOU DOST GIVE THYSELF UNDUE *CREDIT*, BLASTAAR-- FOR, THOUGH THINE IS THE POWER TO *SHATTER MOUNTAINS*...

...THE MYSTIC *MJOLNIR* CAN STILL *SCATTER* THE *FORCE* OF THY POWER BURST TO THE *FOUR WINDS!*

SHA-KOOM!

THE STOLEN **CHEST** HAS BEEN ANALYZED, EVALUATED, AND **ABSORBED**...

...AND THUS, ALL I HAVE LEFT TO **CONCERN** ME NOW IS **BLASTAAR**...

...AND **HE** IS REALLY **NO** CONCERN AT ALL!

AND WITH **THAT**, THE FLICKERING COMPUTER BANK ABRUPTLY GOES **DARK**!

WILT THOU **SURRENDER**, MONSTROUS ONE?

NEVER! I WOULD SOONER... **EH**?

THE **GROUND**-- IT'S BEGUN **TREMBLING!** AND THAT **SOUND**--!

NO!!

MASTER, YOU CAN'T **DO** THIS TO ME!!

BUT BLASTAAR'S PLAINTIVE **GROWL** IS LOST BENEATH THE THUNDROUS **ROAR** OF SURGING **ROCKET ENGINES**--

--AS THE NOW-TRANSFORMED CENTRAL COMPUTER CORE OF THE CALCULATING ENTITY CALLED **FAUST** LEAPS SAVAGELY **SKYWARD**...

...TO BE **SWALLOWED** BY THE ALL-CONSUMING **CLOUDS!**

WHILE, IN THE RUINS OF THE **FACTORY** ITSELF, BLASTAAR GOES **BERSERK!**

HE WOULD NOT **BETRAY** ME--NOT AFTER I SERVED HIM SO **FAITH-FULLY!**

AWAY FROM ME, GOLDEN-HAIR! I HAVE NO MORE **TIME** FOR YOU NOW!

DESPERATELY, WITH GROWING **PANIC**, THE LIVING BOMB-BURST RACES INTO THE VERY **HEART** OF THE STILL-SMOKING RUBBLE, A SILENT **PRAYER** UPON HIS MISSHAPEN LIPS--

--A PRAYER THAT IS SEEMINGLY **ANSWERED!**

IT IS STILL **HERE**-- STILL **FUNCTIONING!**

THE MASTER SAID I HAD MERELY TO PASS THROUGH THIS **PORTAL** TO MAKE MYSELF **KING OF THE NEGATIVE ZONE!**

AND WITH THE MASTER NOW **GONE**, THERE IS NOTHING THAT CAN KEEP ME FROM MY **GOAL!**

BLASTAAR-- **NAY!** THOU KNOWEST NOT WHAT THOU ART **DOING!**

YOU'RE **TOO LATE**, GOLDEN-HAIR-- FAR TOO LATE TO **STOP** ME!!

TRIUMPHANTLY, BLASTAAR **HURLS** HIMSELF THROUGH THE PORTAL-- AND FEELS **AGONY** SUCH AS HE HAS NEVER BEFORE **KNOWN**--

--AS IF HIS EVERY **ATOM** WERE BEING TORN APART...REARRANGED...THEN SLAMMED SAVAGELY BACK **TOGETHER** ONCE MORE!

BUT HIS MASTER HAS PROMISED HIM A **KINGDOM**, AND SO HE **ENDURES** THE PAIN--**GRATEFULLY.**

THEN, AT LAST, HE **EMERGES** FROM THE PORTAL INTO THE FRENZIED COSMOS THAT IS THE **NEGATIVE ZONE**--

--AND **KNOWS** THAT HIS MASTER HAS **LIED** TO HIM!

NO! THAT CURSED **PORTAL**--IT REVERSED THE VERY **POLARITY** OF MY ATOMS!

I AM BEING **DRAWN** TO THE DREADED **EXPLOSIVE BELT** AT THE CENTER OF THE NEGATIVE ZONE-- AND WHEN I **REACH** IT, LIKE ANYTHING **ELSE** FROM THE **POSITIVE UNIVERSE**...

...I WILL BE COMPLETELY AND UTTERLY **DISINTE-GRATED!!**

AND WITH THAT, BLASTAAR BEGINS TO **LAUGH**--A COLD, HARSH, **IRONIC** LAUGH--THAT FOLLOWS HIM INTO **OBLIVION!**

THE BATTLE IS *ENDED!*

THE BLUDGEONING BLASTAAR SHALL *THREATEN* THIS FAIR PLANET NO LONGER!

VERILY, I SHOULD FEEL A SENSE OF *TRIUMPH...*

...AND *YET...*

...I FEEL ONLY A DAMP UN-EARTHLY *CHILL.*

FOR, IN COMBATTING *BLASTAAR*, I HAVE ALLOWED THE ENTITY CALLED *FAUST* TO ESCAPE INTO THE *STRATOSPHERE!*

EVEN NOW, IT *ORBITS* THIS UNSUSPECTING WORLD, ITS ADAMANTIUM STRUCTURE ALL BUT *INDESTRUCTIBLE...*

"...AND ONLY THE SPINNING *FATES* MAY KNOW WHAT *HAVOC* IT AWAITS TO *UNLEASH!*"

*AT PRECISELY THAT MOMENT, HIGH ABOVE THE EARTH, A NUMBER OF EMERALD **LIGHTS** WINK ON ACROSS A SPRAWLING CONSOLE...A SERIES OF ELECTRONIC RELAYS **CLOSE...***

*...AND AN EMOTIONLESS MECHANICAL **VOICE** SOFTLY BEGINS TO **HUM** TO ITSELF!*

NEXT ISSUE:

*THE THUNDER GOD...**IRON MAN**...AND MORE SENSATIONAL **GUEST-STARS** THAN YOU CAN SHAKE CINCINNATI AT, ALL TOGETHER IN A STUNNER WE CALL...*

"...LIKE A DIAMOND IN THE SKY!"

BE HERE!

THOR ®

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THE MIGHTY THOR®

THE THUNDER GOD SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH IRON MAN AGAINST A MONSTER WHO THREATENS THE WORLD!

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...LIKE A DIAMOND IN THE SKY!

THE **SCENE:** A SUPER-SECRET **MISSILE INSTALLATION** SOMEWHERE IN THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES.

THE **MACHINE:** SHIELD'S SPANKING-NEW **AIRBORNE BLOCKHOUSE**, A FLYING **FORTRESS** IN EVERY SENSE OF THE WORD.

THE **PASSENGERS:** SHIELD'S HARD-BITTEN DIRECTOR **NICK FURY**, AND A PASSEL OF PERPLEXED **AVENGERS!**

I'M **TELLIN'** YA, GANG -- IF **THESE** BABIES CAN'T STOP THAT ORBITIN' MURDER-MACHINE, **NOTHIN'** CAN!

NO, MARVELITE, YOU HAVEN'T PICKED UP THE WRONG **BOOK**-- BUT, TRUTH TO TELL, THERE'S ENOUGH **EXCITEMENT** AWAITING YOU WITHIN THESE PAGES TO FILL A WHOLE **STACK** OF BOOKS!

ART THOU CERTAIN THY WEAPONS CAN *PIERCE* FAUST'S *ADAMANTIUM CASING*, FRIEND FURY?

NOPE--BUT WE AIN'T EXACTLY GOT US A *CHOICE*, DO WE?

INDEED ***NOT***, COLONEL. SO LONG AS THAT MECHANISM ORBITS THE EARTH, THREATENING PLANETARY ***DEVASTATION***--

--WE MUST DO EVERYTHING WITHIN OUR POWER TO ***DESTROY*** IT!!

AND, AS IF TO ***EMPHASIZE*** THE VISION'S POINT, A HANDFUL OF SPECIALLY-DESIGNED ***MISSILES*** ABRUPTLY STREAK ***SKYWARD***--

--AS THE SELF-SUFFICIENT COMPUTER CALLED ***FAUST*** HAD DONE A MERE 24 HOURS ***BEFORE!***

IN POINT OF FACT THOUGH, IT HAD ACTUALLY ***BEGUN*** SEVERAL HOURS ***BEFORE*** THAT ***LAUNCHING***--

--WHEN THE HIGH-STRIDING ***STILT-MAN*** HAD ROBBED A PASSING ***HELICOPTER*** AT THE FAUST-MACHINE'S ***COMMAND!***

THE MIGHTY ***THOR*** HAD SUMMONED DOWN THE LIGHTNING TO ***DEFEAT*** THE RAMPAGING STILT-MAN--

--BUT THAT HAD NOT PUT AN ***END*** TO IT!

--FOR ***BLASTAAR*** ENTERED THE FRAY, TAKING THE ***CHEST*** STILT-MAN HAD STOLEN, AND DELIVERING IT TO ***FAUST***--

--BEFORE THE THUNDER GOD LAID THE LIVING BOMB-BURST ***LOW!***

FAUST SOMEHOW **ABSORBED** THE MYSTERIOUS CHEST'S UNIQUE **PROPERTIES**--

--THEN **LAUNCHED** ITS NOW-TRANSFORMED **CENTRAL COMPUTER CORE** INTO ORBIT AROUND THE **EARTH!**

THE FIRST **TRANSMISSIONS** FROM FAUST WERE RECEIVED ON EARTH SOON AFTER! "**DISARM** YOUR ATOMIC WEAPONS," THE COMPUTER "OR **DIE!**"

THE **RESPONSE** OF THIS PLANET'S NUCLEAR NATIONS WAS **SWIFT**--

--AND QUITE **PREDICTABLE!**

IT WAS ALSO, AS SHIELD'S BATTERY OF AWESOMELY-POWERFUL **MISSILES** IS ABOUT TO PROVE--

--ALARMINGLY **INEFFECTUAL!**

FOUR OF THE MISSILES ARE DESTROYED LONG BEFORE THEY CAN **REACH** THE ORBITING MURDER-MACHINE-- BUT THE FIFTH, MOST **POWERFUL**, MISSILE MAKES **CONTACT!**

FOR A MOMENT, THE SKY IS LIT WITH **FURY**-- AND, ACROSS THE EARTH, VOICES ARE RAISED IN FERVENT **PRAYER!**

THEN THE LIGHT **FADES**, AND THE MOCKING SOUND OF MECHANICAL **LAUGHTER** CAN BE HEARD AROUND THE WORLD!

FAUST HAS SURVIVED, **UNSCATHED!**

AND SHORTLY, IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE **SHIELD HELI-CARRIER**...

THEM MISSILES WERE OUR BEST **SHOT**--AN' WE **BLEW** IT! AS OF **NOW**, GROUP-- I'M OPEN TA **SUGGESTIONS!**

WELL, THERE'S ALWAYS THE **DIRECT** APPROACH--**OPEN WARFARE!**

NAY, SCARLET WITCH-- THE **RISK** IS FAR TOO **GREAT!**

THEN THAT LEAVES US ONLY-- **PROJECT 13!**

MY SWEET STARS AND GARTERS! THE **DOOMSDAY DEVICE**?!

ISN'T THAT A LITTLE **EXTREME**, SHELLHEAD?

I'M WITH **YOU**, FUZZY! THE WAY **I** HEARD IT, THAT GIZMO CAN WASTE THIS WHOLE BLAMED **PLANET** IF ANYTHIN' GOES WRONG!

THEN WE ARE LEFT BUT **ONE** CHOICE, MY FRIENDS! 'TIS **MY** FAULT FAUST DOTH NOW **THREATEN** THIS FAIR WORLD--

--AND 'TIS I **ALONE** WHO MUST **STOP** IT!

WRONG, AVENGER! OUR OPPONENT IS A **MACHINE**, REMEMBER--

--AND THAT PUTS THE BALL IN **MY** COURT! I'M COMING **WITH** YOU!

WE'RE **ALL** COMING WITH YOU, THOR--!

NO, CAP-- WE'LL NEED **MOST** OF OUR RESOURCES TO **PROTECT** PROJECT 13 FROM FAUST IF THE THUNDER GOD AND I SHOULD **FAIL!**

YOU'LL ALL HAVE TO STAY **BEHIND!**

*THERE ARE THE INEVITABLE **ARGUMENTS**, OF COURSE, BUT THESE PEOPLE ARE **PROFESSIONALS**--*

*--AND, IN THE END, A RELUCTANT **CAPTAIN AMERICA** AND HIS COMPANIONS **DEPART** THE HELI-CARRIER--*

*--LEAVING THE MIGHTY THOR AND IRON MAN **BEHIND!***

AND IN FAR LESS TIME THAN THE ARCHITECT **DAEDALUS** COULD EVER HAVE THOUGHT **POSSIBLE** WHEN HE AND HIS SON **ICARUS** FIRST TOOK **FLIGHT**, THE BORROWED **SHIELDCRAFT** IS SWOOPING LOW OVER A SECLUDED **INSTALLATION** DEEP IN THE COLORADO **ROCKIES**--

--THE HIDDEN HEADQUARTERS OF **PROJECT 13!**

AMAZING! YOU COULD **FLY** OVER THIS AREA A DOZEN TIMES AND NEVER NOTICE **ANYTHING**--

--UNLESS YOU **KNEW** THIS BASE WAS **HERE!**

INDEED-- AND YET THIS NON-DESCRIPT LABORATORY HOLDS A **SECRET** THAT CAN DESTROY THE **WORLD!**

WHILE...

VERILY, MY HEART **SINGS** WITH THE THOUGHT OF THE COMING **BATTLE!**

WHILE I'M JUST GLAD **MY** HEART KEEPS **BEATING!**

THOU **KNOWEST** WHAT THY MEN MUST **DO**, FRIEND FURY?

DON'T **SWEAT** IT, GOLDILOCKS! A GUY DON'T GET **OLD** IN THIS BUSINESS BY MAKIN' **MISTAKES!**

YER **COVERIN' FIRE** IS READY WHEN **YOU** ARE!

THEN WISH US **LUCK**, NICK-- AND **HIT** IT!

AND MOMENTS LATER, WITHIN THE MECHANICAL ENTITY CALLED **FAUST**...

THE **FOOLS!** APPARENTLY, THEY HAVE NOT YET LEARNED THEIR **LESSON!**

"THEY'VE LAUNCHED ANOTHER **MISSILE-BARRAGE** AGAINST ME...

"...THOUGH I CAN'T **BEGIN** TO COMREHEND WHAT THEY HOPE TO **ACCOMPLISH** BY IT...

"...SINCE MY **AUTOMATIC DEFENSE SYSTEMS** CAN ELIMINATE **THESE** WEAPONS AS EASILY AS THEY'VE DESTROYED ALL THE **OTHERS!**"

FORTUNATELY, THE CALCULATING COMPUTER'S **INTERNAL** SECURITY IS NOT AS EFFICIENT AS ITS **EXTERNAL** DEFENSES--

--OR ELSE IT WOULD SOON **UNDERSTAND** THE REASON FOR THIS SEEMINGLY-SENSELESS **ASSAULT:**

SIMPLY PUT, IT HAS SERVED TO **DISTRACT** THE FAUST-MACHINE FROM THE **TRUE** THREAT TO ITS SURVIVAL--

--A SUPERNATURAL **VORTEX** WHICH SUDDENLY WHIRLS INTO VIEW WITHIN THE VERY **BOWELS** OF THE ORBITING COMPUTER-COMPLEX...

...TO DISCHARGE A PAIR OF ANXIOUS **AVENGERS!**

YOUR MAGIC HAMMER **GOT** US HERE, PAL-- AS YOU **SAID** IT WOULD!

AYE, ARMORED ONE--THERE ARE *FEW* THINGS BEYOND THE POWER OF THE MYSTIC MALLET ***MJOLNIR!***

BUT THIS DEATH-DEVICE'S ***ADAMANTIUM CONSTRUCTION*** IS ***ONE*** OF THEM, THOR--

--SO WE'D BEST MOVE ***CAUTIOUSLY*** FROM HERE ON... ***EH?***

MINIATURE ***CANNONS***-- SPRINGING FROM THE VERY ***WALLS***--!?!

BEWARE, GOOD COMRADE! WE HAVE WALKED BLINDLY INTO...

"...A ***CROSSFIRE!!***"

*IN AN INSTANT, THE AIR IS **SIZZLING** WITH THE SEETHING HEAT OF OVERWHELMING **LASER-FIRE**--*

*--AND THE GROWING **REPERCUSSIONS** OF THE BATTLE CAN ALMOST BE **FELT** BACK ON TERRA FIRMA...*

*...BY SUCH AS THE COSMICALLY-AWARE **CAPTAIN MARVEL**, FOR EXAMPLE--*

THE SITUATION ABOVE GROWS ***WORSE***-- I CAN ***SENSE*** IT!

*--AND THE EVER-ENIGMATIC **VICTOR VON DOOM!***

A BATTLE IS BEING FOUGHT FOR THE ***FUTURE*** OF THIS ENTIRE ***PLANET***--

--BUT IN THE ***END***, THE ONLY ***VICTOR*** SHALL BE ***DOCTOR DOOM!!***

BY HELA! THERE ARE TOO MANY OF THE CURSED CANNONS! WE CAN NE'ER DESTROY THEM ALL!

MAYBE WE DON'T HAVE TO, THOR!

THAT PANEL ABOVE ME SHOULD HOUSE THE MASTER CONTROL FOR THESE WEAPONS! IF WE CAN DESTROY THAT...

AYE, MY FRIEND-- I TAKE THY MEANING!

MIGHTY MJOLNIR NEED STRIKE BUT ONCE-- AND 'TIS DONE!

SKRAKT!

I ONLY WISH IT WERE DONE, AVENGER--

--BUT THOSE LASERS HAVE BEEN REPLACED BY A WALL OF BUZZ-SAWS!

SKROOM!

AND THOSE HAVE BEEN REPLACED BY SCRAP--

--THANKS TO MY HANDY REPULSOR RAYS!

WE'RE JUST LUCKY THOSE BLADES WEREN'T MADE OF ADAMANTIUM, LIKE MOST OF THE REST OF THIS PLACE!

INDEED, ARMORED ONE-- BUT WE CAN OFFER UP THANKS WHEN THIS NIGHTMARE BE ENDED!

YET, FOR THE AVENGER IN THE GLEAMING GOLDEN **ARMOR**, THAT NIGHTMARE MIGHT VERY WELL END RIGHT **HERE!**

NO! MUST'VE TRIPPED A HIDDEN **SENSOR**-- ACTIVATED SOME SORT OF **ENERGY-SAPPING DEVICE**--!

IT'S COMPLETELY **DRAINING** MY ARMOR OF **POWER!** HAVE TO **FIGHT** IT... HAVE TO...

UUNNHH!!

WITHIN HIS IRON SHELL, TONY STARK WATCHES THE **POWER-LEVEL INDICATOR-LIGHT** SLOWLY GO **DARK**...

...UNTIL, AT LAST, HE PLUMMETS TO THE **REINFORCED** FLOORING LIKE A MORTALLY-WOUNDED **BIRD!**

KLANG!

BY THE BRISTLING BEARD OF ODIN! THE NOBLE IRON MAN HATH **FALLEN!!**

I MUST HASTEN TO MY COMRADE'S SIDE **SWIFTLY**, LEST HE BE... **EH?**

HEIMDALL'S EYES! 'TIS NOT **POSSIBLE!**

"AN ARMY OF ADAMANTIUM **DEFENSE-DRONES** DRAWS NIGH-- CUTTING ME **OFF** FROM THE INJURED **IRON MAN!**

"MINE ENCHANTED MALLET IS ALL BUT **USELESS** 'GAINST CREATURES SUCH AS THESE, BUT METHINKS **BATTLE** IS NOT NOW **NECESSARY**...

"...WHEN THERE IS A FAR **EASIER** WAY OF ACHIEVING MY **GOAL!**"

FOR A MOMENT, THE THUNDER GOD STANDS FRAMED BEFORE THE DEFENSE-DRONE'S **VISUAL SCANNERS**--

--THEN HE STRIKES HIS **HAMMER** ONCE UPON THE **FLOOR**--

--AND IN A BLINDING FLASH OF OTHER-WORLDLY **LIGHT**--

--HE IS **GONE!**

IN UTTER **CONFUSION**, THE DEFENSE-DRONES SCURRY ABOUT, DESPERATELY SEEKING SOME **SIGN** OF THEIR VANISHED **TARGET**--

--DISCOUNTING THE CABLE-FILLED **UTILITY-SHAFTS** AS BEING TOO **SMALL** TO CONTAIN SO **MASSIVE** A FIGURE--

--UNTIL, FINALLY **ACKNOWLEDGING** THEIR **FAILURE**--

--THEY AUTO-MATICALLY **DEACTIVATE!**

IT **WORKED!** THE GOD OF THUNDER COULD **NEVER** HAVE FIT IN HERE--

--BUT IT WAS A **SNAP** FOR THE SKINNY **DR. DON BLAKE!**

NOW ALL I HAVE TO DO IS FIND MY **WAY** THROUGH THIS CALIGARIAN **MAZE**--

--BEFORE TIME RUNS OUT FOR **IRON MAN!**

AND, PERHAPS, FOR THE TEEMING, BUSTLING, BUSY WORLD **BELOW!**

WHERE, UNFORTUNATELY, SOME OF THOSE WHO MIGHT HELP TO **AVERT** A PLANETARY CATASTROPHE JUST AREN'T **HOME** AT THE MOMENT!

FOR RENT
TOP 5 FLOORS OF
BAXTER BUILDING

WHILE, BACK *INSIDE* THE MONSTROUS FAUST-MACHINE...

IF I'VE *FIGURED* THIS RIGHT, THERE SHOULD BE ANOTHER *ACCESS HATCH* JUST AROUND THIS CORNER--

--WHICH SHOULD LET ME OUT RIGHT *BESIDE* THE SPOT WHERE IRON MAN *FELL!*

SWEET MERCY! THERE HE *IS*-- AND H-HE ISN'T *MOVING!*

BLAST, I CAN'T BE *TOO LATE*-- IT JUST ISN'T *FAIR!*

IT'S *MY* FAULT SHELLHEAD GOT *INVOLVED* IN THIS MESS! I'VE GOT TO GET HIM *OUT* OF IT!

I'VE *GOT* TO!

TONY? TONY, CAN YOU *HEAR* ME?

WEAK...SO WEAK... CHESTPLATE DRAINED OF ENERGY...

...CAN'T LAST...MUCH LONGER... WITHOUT... POWER...

IF IT'S *POWER* YOU NEED, OLD FRIEND, IT'S POWER YOU'LL *HAVE*--

--ONCE I SMACK MY *WALKING STICK* AGAINST THE FLOOR--

--POWER WHICH IS THE GIVEN *BIRTHRIGHT* OF HE WHO IS *GOD OF THE STORM AND THE LIVING LIGHTNING!!*

TWICE, THE ENCHANTED MALLET MJOLNIR IS STRUCK UPON THE COLD METALLIC FLOORING--

THANG!

THANG!

--AND INSTANTLY, THE COMPUTER CHAMBER IS FILLED WITH SAVAGE SHAFTS OF LIGHTNING--

--ENERGIES WHICH CORUSCATE FOR A MOMENT OVER IRON MAN'S PROSTRATE FORM--

--THEN, AT THEIR MASTER'S COMMAND, SWIFTLY FADE!

STILL DOTH THE ARMORED ONE LAY MOTIONLESS! WAS MY RAGING STORM TOO GREAT?

HAVE I SLAIN WHERE I SOUGHT TO SAVE?

THOR?

HEY... THANKS, OL' BUDDY.

PRAISE BE TO ODIN!

IRON MAN DOTH LIVE!!

YOU'D BETTER BELIEVE IT, ASGARDIAN... IF YOU CAN CALL THIS LIVING!

HANG ON A SECOND, WHILE I DISCHARGE THE EXCESS ENERGY YOUR LITTLE TRANSFUSION FED INTO MY ARMOR...

AN INCONSEQUENTIAL CARBON-STEEL BULKHEAD **SHATTERS** BEFORE THE RELENTLESS ONSLAUGHT OF THESE TWO ANGRY **AVENGERS**--

...AND THEN THE **TWO** OF US CAN START TAKING THIS PLACE **APART!!**

SKRANG!

--THOUGH THEY ARE LIKELY TO FIND THE ADAMANTIUM-SHIELDED **CENTRAL CORE** OF THE FAUST-MACHINE A FAR MORE **FORMIDABLE** OBSTACLE!

THAT'S PROVING, OF COURSE, THEY MANAGE TO **LIVE** THAT LONG!

IRON MAN-- **BEHIND** US! A NEW **WEAPON** HATH SPRUNG FROM YONDER **WALL**--!

I'LL GIVE THIS MECHANISM CREDIT FOR **ONE** THING--IT'S **PERSISTENT!**

PERSISTENT-- AND **DEADLY!**

BUT EVEN AS A HIGH-VELOCITY **CANISTER BLAST** SPRAYS THE AIR WITH SAVAGE **FURY**--

--WE'D BEST TAKE ANOTHER **PEEK** AT MOTHER EARTH!

MY **SPIDER-SENSE** HAS BEEN TINGLING ALL DAY-- WARNING ME OF **DANGER!**

BUT WHATEVER IS **THREATENING** THE WORLD, IT'S WAY OUT OF THE LEAGUE OF YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD **WEB-SLINGER!**

ARE YOU OKAY, THOR?

SKRASH!

AYE, MY FRIEND--MY HAMMER DID PROTECT ME FROM THE BRUNT OF THE CANISTER-BLAST!

AND NOW, BUT A SINGLE WALL DOTH SEPARATE US FROM OUR GOAL!

BUT WHEN THAT FINAL BARRIER HAS FALLEN...

HUH? SOME SORT OF ENERGY-SHIELD--BARRING OUR WAY!

BUT NOT FOR LONG, ARMORED ONE! ENCHANTED MJOLNIR SHALL...

I DON'T RECOMMEND THAT!

LIFT ONE HAND AGAINST THAT SHIELD--AND YOU WILL AUTOMATICALLY TRIGGER A LASER-BLAST DESIGNED TO DESTROY NEW YORK CITY!!

THOU WOULDST SLAY TEN MILLION INNOCENT SOULS SO CALLOUSLY?

WHY, MACHINE? I SAY THEE--WHY??

FOR SELF-PRESERVATION, OF COURSE! I WAS CREATED WITH THAT AS MY PRIMARY FUNCTION!

I AM A FULLY-AUTOMATED UNIT OF STRUCTURAL TECHNOLOGY, DESIGNED TO SURVIVE FOREVER--

--AND THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT I WILL DO!!

THEN WHY DIDST THOU ORDER THAT CHEST STOLEN? UNTIL THEN, NO MAN EVEN KNEW OF THINE EX-ISTENCE!

THOU WERT WHOLLY SAFE!

NOW I AM SAFER!

THOUGH STRUCK BY YOUR LIGHTNING, THE CHEST SURVIVED--AND I HAVE ABSORBED ITS UNIQUE ATOMIC STRUCTURE, MAKING MYSELF INVINCIBLE!

THE DEVIL YOU SAY!?!

IRON MAN, HAST THOU GONE *MAD*?

ATTACK YON MACHINE-- AND THOU DOST *DOOM* AN ENTIRE *CITY*!!

SHOOM!

DON'T ASK *QUESTIONS*, AVENGER-- JUST FOLLOW MY *LEAD*!

SHOOM!

THIS MAY JUST BE THE *ONLY* HOPE LEFT FOR *ANY* OF US!

FOR AN INSTANT, THE SON OF ODIN *HESITATES*--

--RECALLING THE GRISLY *VENGEANCE* THE FAUST-MACHINE HAD THREATENED AT THE FIRST SIGN OF *AGGRESSION*--

--THEN, PRAYING TO HIS FATHER AND THE FATES THAT IRON MAN TRULY *KNOWS* WHAT HE IS *DOING*--

--THE GOD OF THUNDER JOINS THE *FRAY*!

FOOLS! YOU WERE *WARNED*! WHAT HAPPENS NOW IS *YOUR* RESPONSIBILITY--

--TEN MILLION *DEATHS* LAID AT YOUR FEET!

AND EVEN AS THE MIGHTY THOR AND IRON MAN STRIVE TO BATTER DOWN FAUST'S *DEFENSES*, THE CALCULATING COMPUTER PROVES *TRUE TO ITS WORD*--

--TRIGGERING A MONSTROUS *LASER-CANNON* WHICH LIGHTS THE SKY WITH CRIMSON *FIRE*!

IT IS A **LIGHT** WHICH CAN BE **SEEN** AROUND THE **WORLD**...

...BOGGLING THE **MINDS** OF SOME...

...NUMBING THE **SENSES** OF OTHERS...

...AND CHILLING THE VERY **SOULS** OF ALL THE REST!

LIKE A GREAT SCARLET **SCYTHE**, THE LASER-BEAM SLASHES A DEADLY **PATH** THROUGH SPACE--

--AS IT **LANCES** RELENTLESSLY **EARTHWARD**--

--UNTIL, LESS THAN A **MILE** ABOVE THE SOOT-SPATTERED SPIRES OF **NEW YORK CITY**--

--THE LASER-BEAM **EXPLODES**--

--SPRAYING THE SKY WITH A SPECTACULAR--AND **HARMLESS**--DISPLAY OF **FIREWORKS!!**

I KNOW NOT HOW IRON MAN **ACCOMPLISHED** THIS MIRACLE-- NOR DOTH IT **MATTER!**

SKRASH!

VERILY, ALL THAT MATTERS **NOW**, FAUST-- IS THY **DESTRUCTION!!**

THEN, EVEN AS THE CALCULATOR'S CIRCUITRY BEGINS TO SPARK AND SPUTTER...

WE'VE DONE **ENOUGH**, THOR! LET'S GET **OUT** OF HERE!

AT IRON MAN'S **URGING**, THE THUNDER GOD **FOLLOWS** HIM OUT INTO THE **STRATOSPHERE**--

--WHILE, **BEHIND** THEM, FAUST TREMBLES IN **RAGE**!

RAGE... OR SOMETHING **ELSE**?

SOMETHING **WRONG**... CIRCUITRY GOING **HAYWIRE**...

...SHAKING MY COMPONENTS **APART**... BUT **HOW**?

I AM... FORGED OF **ADAMANTIUM**... COMPLETELY **INDE-STRUCTIBLE**... COMPLETELY...

WELL, MAYBE NOT **COMPLETELY** INDESTRUCTIBLE!

AND THE **DEATH-SONG** OF THE SELF-SERVING COMPUTER CALLED **FAUST** IS SPREAD ACROSS THE COSMOS IN MYRIAD FRAGMENTS OF TORN AND TWISTED **METAL**!

AND SOON, BACK ON **TERRA FIRMA**...

WE HAVE BEEN **VICTORIOUS**, MY FRIEND-- BUT STILL AM I UNCERTAIN PRECISELY **HOW**!

ACTUALLY, PAL-- THAT WAS **YOUR** DOING! THE **LIGHT-NING** THAT STRUCK DOWN STILT-MAN ALSO **CHANGED** THE PROPERTIES OF THE **CHEST** HE CARRIED!

WHEN FAUST **ABSORBED** THAT CHEST INTO HIS SYSTEM, HE ALSO UNWITTINGLY **ALTERED** THE STRUCTURE OF HIS **ADAMANTIUM CASING**--

--DESTROYING ITS **INVULNERABILITY**!

TRULY, THE FATES MUST REVEL IN **IRONY**, ARMORED ONE!

'TIS SOMETHING TO **PONDER** TILL NEXT WE **MEET**!

AND WITH THAT, THE GOD OF THUNDER IS **GONE** FROM THAT MID-MANHATTAN **ROOFTOP**--THE THONG OF HIS ENCHANTED HAMMER CLENCHED TIGHTLY IN HIS FIST--THE WARM GRIN OF **TRIUMPH** SPREAD ACROSS HIS CHISELED FEATURES--

--FOR HE HAS FOUGHT THE GOOD **FIGHT** ONCE MORE, AND HE HAS BEEN **VICTORIOUS**--

--AND, FOR THE MOMENT, ALL IS **RIGHT** WITH HIS **WORLD!**

SO LONG LEN— GOOD LUCK!

NEL'S PLACE

SWILL SHOOTER'S A MELLOW BREW

NEXT ISSUE: **THE DAY THOR FAILED!**

THOR ®

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THE MIGHTY

THOR®

THE THUNDER GOD'S GREATEST TRIUMPH-- OR TRAGEDY BEYOND COMPARE!

NOW BEGINS WONDER WITHOUT END!

YOU MUST READ: THE DAY THE THUNDER FAILED!

When lame Dr. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic mallet MJOLNIR—and Blake is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm and the Lightning, Heir to the Throne of Immortal Asgard...

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!™

THE DAY THE THUNDER FAILED!

PORTRAIT OF A SUPER-HERO (NOT TO MENTION NORSE DEITY) TRIUMPHANT:

A VERY REAL **THREAT** TO EARTH'S EXISTENCE HAS BEEN **VANQUISHED***... A DANGER **ENDED**, A MISSION SUCCESSFULLY **COMPLETED**.

QUERY: WHERE, AFTER TURMOIL AND NEAR-TRAGEDY, DOES A LIVING, BREATHING **THUNDER GOD** GO WHEN THE SONG OF BATTLE **FADES**...?

A TRIO OF TITANS-- RE-TEAMED!

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* LAST ISSUE. --ROY.

ANSWER:
BY ODIN'S FLOWING BEARD!
A TEST OF STRENGTH ENSUES BELOW--
--ONE SO UNEQUAL AS TO AROUSE MINE IRE.
GO TO IT, JOEY-BABY! YA WANTED TA FIGHT BACK, DINTCHA?
WELL, I AIN'T EXACKLY RUNNIN' AWAY.
YOU BIG BULLY! IF-- IF I COULD--
HEY! WHAT'S THAT WIND STARTIN' UP?
WIND?! TH-THAT AIN'T NO WIND!
GANGWAY!
FORGIVE MINE INTRUSION, LADS, UPON WHAT WAS PERHAPS A PRIVATE AFFAIR...
IT'S THOR-- ONE'A THEM AVENGER GUYS!!
--BUT, I DID SENSE A GREAT DISPARITY IN THE STATURE OF THE PRO-TAGONISTS.
YEAH! THAT BULLY WAS A WHOLE LOT BIGGER'N JOEY, TOO!
I JUST WISH I WAS BIG ENUFF TO RUN 'IM OFF BY MYSELF!
YET, FLEE HE DOTH, ALL THE SAME, THUS REVEAL-ING HIS TRUE STRIPE...
...AS BULLIES ARE EVER WONT TO DO.
AW, WHADDA YOU KNOW ABOUT BEIN' PICKED ON 'CAUSE YER LITTLE?
I READ ALL ABOUT YOU IN "CURRENT EVENTS"...
...AN' NOBODY EVER GOT THE BEST'A YOU IN A FIGHT.
MAYHAP YOU ARE RIGHT... MAYHAP NOT.
YEAH? THEN GIMME A FERINSTANCE.
'TIS A SIMPLER REQUEST THAN THOU DOST KNOW.
JEEZ! HE SURE TALKS FUNNY.
'TWAS IN A LONG AGO TIME, A FAR-DISTANT LAND...

"...A LAND WHOSE SKY-BRUSHING *TREES* WOULD HAVE DWARFED THE TOWERING *REDWOODS* OF THINE OWN EARTH, AS IF THEY WERE THE MEREST *SAPLINGS*...!

BY MY SIRE'S EIGHT-HOOVED STEED!

LOKI! WHAT DOST *THOU* MAKE OF THIS EERIE FOREST WHERE *SIZE* DOTH RUN *RAMPANT*?

I WISH ONLY THAT WE'D NOT BECOME *LOST*, MY BROTHER.

IN SOOTH, WE ARE *FAR FROM ASGARD*-- AND IT GROWS EVER *DARKER*, MOMENT BY MOMENT!

BAH! THOU ART NE'ER SO *BRAVE*, TRICKSTER, AS WHEN SHIELDED ON EVERY SIDE BY *ARMED IMMORTALS*.

NOT FOR *THOR* BE THE COMFORTS OF A *FALSE COURAGE*... BUT ONLY THAT OF HIS *GOOD RIGHT ARM!*

TRULY, THUNDER GOD, 'TIS AS THE *ALL-FATHER* OFT HATH SAID:

THOU ART SORELY LACKING IN *HUMILITY*.

WHAT *USE* HUMILITY TO ONE WHO WIELDS THE *RAGING LIGHTNING* IN HIS MYSTIC HAMMER?

STILL, WE SHALL FIND *NO LODGING* THIS NIGHT, SO IT BEHOOVES US TO--

HOLD, THOR!

OVER *THERE*--!

'TIS... SOME SORT OF *CAVE!*

SURELY 'TWILL *PROTECT* US FROM ANY WHO *PROWL THE DARK*.

AYE-- THOUGH 'TIS *STRANGELY* SHAPED.

WELL, *NO GOOD* SHALL COME OF STUMBLING ABOUT THIS *FOREST* BY NIGHT...

YET, 'TIS BLACK AS THE PITY OF THY DAUGHTER *HELA* WITHIN!

WATCH THY *STEP*, TIMID ONE.

WATCH THINE *OWN*, THUNDERER! *LOKI* NEEDS NO--

ARRRR

YAAAH!

THIS *CAVE*-- THE VERY *GROUND*-- IT *QUAKES* 'NEATH OUR FEET!

NAY! SEE? ALREADY IT DOTH *CEASE*.

AYE... BUT ONLY TO BEGIN *ANEW* AT ANY MOMENT.

TAKE THY *SLEEP*, LOKI. *THOR* WILL STAND GUARD THIS NIGHT.

'TIS BUT *FITTING*, SINCE 'TWAS *I* WHO DID *FIND* THIS SAFE HAVEN.

WAKE ME IF AUGHT DOTH *THREATEN*.

"BUT, THOUGH THE COUNTRYSIDE AND CAVERN *SHOOK* AT REGULAR INTERVALS, THERE WAS NO SIGN OF TRUE *DANGER*.

"THUS, I DID *KEEP WATCH* TILL MORN, REVELING IN MINE OWN *SELF-ASSURANCE*.

"AND, WHEN *DAWN* WAS COME AT LAST...

I TRUST THOU DIDST SLEEP *WELL*, LOKI?

AYE... LIKE UNTO A *BABE*.

AND NOW, WITH THE RISING *SUN* TO GUIDE OUR PATH..

...WE'LL SOON FIND OUR WAY *OUT* OF THIS--

THUNDER GOD! DO MINE EYES PLAY *HAVOC* WITH ME??

NAY! WHAT *LOKI* DOTH SEE--

--ODIN'S *TRUE* SON DOTH SEE, AS *WELL!*

'TIS A *GIANT*-- BUT ONE FAR *LARGER* THAN ANY I HAVE E'ER BEHELD, EITHER IN *ASGARD* OR ELSEWHERE!

THEN THE *QUAKING* WE DID FEEL LAST NIGHT-- WAS BUT THE *GIANT'S SNORES!*

WHATEVER THEY WERE-- *LOOK!* THE CREATURE STIRS-- *WAKENS!*

SLAY IT SWIFTLY WITH THINE ENCHANTED *HAMMER*, BEFORE--

WHY? THE GIANT HATH DONE US *NO HARM.*

I WOULD KNOW *MORE* ABOUT HIM AND HIS LAND.

THEN ASK ME WHAT YE WOULD, GNATLINGS!

SKRYMIR HEARS YOUR WORDS... THOUGH ONLY BARELY!

SKRYMIR-- THOU WHOSE NAME DOTH TRULY MEAN "*BIG FELLOW*"--

BECOMING *LOST* LAST EVENING, WE SLEPT IN YONDER *CAVE* UNTIL--

CAVE!?

OH, I SEE! YOU MEAN MY GLOVE HERE!

I TRUST IT KEPT OUT THE COLD, LITTLE ONES.

NOW, WHAT DO YOU WISH IN THE LAND OF UTGARD?

UTGARD? WE DID NOT KNOW ITS *NAME*, SKRYMIR.

YET, BEING HERE, WE WOULD KNOW *MORE* OF IT-- AND, IF THOU DOST *RULE* IT--

SPEAK FOR *THYSELF*, THOR!

LOKI WOULD FAIN BE BACK IN *ASGARD!*

QUARREL AMONGST YE AS YE WILL, LITTLE ONES!

SKRYMIR MUST HIE HIM TO THE HALL OF UTGARD BY THE MORROW--

--AND IT BE MANY LEAGUES DISTANT!

WAIT THEE, GIANT!

LET HIM *PASS!*

WHAT HAVE *ASGARDIANS* TO DO WITH THE LIKES OF *HIM*?

AS EVER, THOU DOST THINK WITH THY *TONGUE*.

WHO SAVE SKRYMIR CAN SHOW US THE QUICKEST, SUREST WAY *OUT* OF THIS TOWERING FOREST?

ALAS, THY WORDS FOR ONCE HAVE *TRUTH'S OWN RING.*

LEAD ON-- AND LOKI WILL *FOLLOW.*

"THE SKY WAS *DARKENING* WHEN AT LAST WE REACHED THE PRONE GIANT...

ODIN'S BLOOD! DOTH THIS BEHEMOTH DO NAUGHT BUT *SLEEP?*

HO, SKRYMIR! THOU HAST LED US A *MERRY CHASE* THIS LONG DAY.

HAST THOU *FOOD* ABOUT THY PERSON, PERCHANCE-- FOR WE TWO BE *FAMISHED.*

FOOD? AYE-- ALL YE CAN EAT, IN YONDER BAG!

TAKE WHAT YE WILL--BUT I WARN YE, DISTURB NOT MY REST WITH MUNCHING!

OUR *THANKS* TO THEE, TALL ONE.

"ALMOST BEFORE I FINISHED SPEAKING, THE GIANT'S *SNORING* ONCE MORE ROCKED THE FOREST PRIMEVAL...

"BUT, MINE INTEREST, AND LOKI'S, WERE ALL IN THE *BAG* AT HIS FEET...

'TIS A *TIGHT KNOT* THE GIANT HATH TIED.

THOU ART A GOD OF *MISCHIEF*, NOT OF *MIGHT*.

BEHOLD HOW THE MATCHLESS STRENGTH OF A *THUNDER GOD* CAN--

UNNH!

EVEN *MY* POWER CANNOT UNFASTEN THIS *SINGLE STRAND!*

BY THE *ALL-FATHER*-- DOTH THIS GIANT SEEK TO *STARVE* US, OR ELSE TO DRIVE US *MAD?*

WHAT WILT THOU *DO*, GOLDEN-HAIR?

DO?

WHY, *NAUGHT*, ASGARDIAN.

NAUGHT SAVE *SCRAMBLE* UPON THE GIANT'S PULSING *CARCASS*--

--TAKE MINE *HAMMER* IN HAND--

--AND *SMITE* HIM WITH THE FORCE OF A HEAVEN-SENT *THUNDERBOLT!*

THWA-OOM!

"TRULY, THE *EARTH* DID SHAKE-- *STORM-CLOUDS* ROILED AND RUMBLED--

"YET, MOMENTS LATER, WHEN THE THUNDER *STOPPED*...

HO, LITTLE ONE... I THINK I FELT SOME-THING.

DID A *LEAF* DROP LIGHTLY 'PON MINE HEAD, PER-CHANCE?

N-NAY, SKRYMIR.

MAYHAP I BUT IMAGINED IT, THEN.

OR MAYHAP IT WAS AN ACORN, OR A BIRD-DROPPING, DOST THOU SUPPOSE?

"I, FOR ONCE, SAID *NOTHING.*

"FOR, IT WAS *BEYOND BELIEF* THAT MINE EN-ENCHANTED *MJOLNIR* HAD *FAILED* ME.

WELL, IT MATTERS LITTLE, EH?

WILL YE TWO ACCOMPANY ME TO UTGARDHALL?

AYE, SKRYMIR.

FOLLOW ME, THEN, AS BEST YE CAN!

"WITH THAT, HE *STRODE OFF...*

"NOR WAS THE MAN-MONSTER'S PATH *DIFFICULT* TO TRACE...

"FOR, EACH *TRACK* HE LEFT WAS AS GREAT AS A SMALL *CRATER.*

"WE FOLLOWED HIS TRAIL *ALL THE NIGHT...* AND THEN, AS *DAWN* STREAKED THE SKY...

THOR! DOST THOU *SEE--?*

MINE *EYES* ARE AS STRONG AS *EVER* THEY WERE, LOKI...

...THOUGH MINE *ARM* WAS SURELY *WEAKER* THAN USUAL, WHEN LAST IT STRUCK.

'TIS *UTGARDHALL*, BEYOND DOUBT-- AND OUR "*BIG FELLOW*" HATH VANISHED THEREIN.

AN *IMPOSING* EDIFICE ENOW...

BUT, ARE WE *MORTAL*, TO TREMBLE BEFORE MERE *STONE TOWERS?*

"*LOKI*, QUAKING WITH FEAR BEHIND ME, KEPT HIS *SILENCE.*

"NOR, TRUTH TO TELL, DID I *FEEL* SO CONFIDENT AS MY *WORDS* DID SEEM.

"AND, INDEED, I FELT EVEN *LESS* SO AS WE DREW *NEARER*, AND REALIZED THE MASSIVE *SCALE* OF THE PLACE...

"YET, I WAS *YOUNG*... TOO YOUNG TO ADMIT TO *FEAR*.

BY MIRMIR'S WELL OF WISDOM!

'TIS AN *ABODE OF GIANTS*, FOR CERTAIN!

FOR MINE OWN PART, I WOULD RATHER WE HAD REMAINED *LOST*.

IMMORTALS OF ASGARD HAVE NO NEED TO FEAR *ANY*, EITHER IN HEAVEN OR EARTH.

SEE HOW EASILY WE GAINED *ACCESS* TO THE CASTLE.

AYE-- BY SQUEEZING OUR WAY BENEATH A *CLOSED DOOR*, LIKE INSECTS FROM *MIDGARD!**

IS *SKRYMIR* IN SIGHT?

NAY, NOT *SKRYMIR* HIMSELF...

**MIDGARD: ASGARDIAN NAME FOR OUR EARTH. --ROY.*

...BUT *ANOTHER*, OF SIMILAR STATURE... AND SPORTING A *KINGLY CROWN!*

HE DOTH NOT SEEM TO *NOTICE* US.

DO *WE* NOTE THE *ANTS* AT OUR FEET?

SPEAK FOR *THYSELF*, GODLING...

THOR BE NO *ANT*... NO MEREST *INSECT!*

THOR BE THE *SON OF ODIN*... THE *GOD OF THUNDER!*

HE *SHALL* NOTICE ME-- AND THAT *RIGHT NOW!!*

FROOM

"AND INDEED HE *DID*... THOUGH NOT IN THE WAY I WOULD HAVE *PREFERRED*...

WHAT?? DO TINY VERMIN NOW DEMAND AN AUDIENCE OF *UTGARD*, MASTER OF UTGARDHALL?

WHAT DO YE HERE, FLY-SPECKS?

SPEAK-- BEFORE I SET MY FOOT ON YE!

"THEN, ALL THE *PROPER INTRODUCTIONS* WERE MADE, AFTER WHICH--

SO, YE GODS OF ASGARD-- PROVE YOUR-SELVES WORTHY IN *FIVE TASKS* I SHALL NOW SET YE--

--OR I'LL GIVE YE *DUNGEONS*, RATHER THAN DIRECTIONS!

BRING ON *ANY* WHO BE NOT SO *O'ERGROWN* AS THEE-- AND WE SHALL *VANQUISH* HIM!

SO SAYETH *LOKI*, AS WELL!

'TIS DONE! BEHOLD MY MAN *LOGI*, WHO SHALL HUMBLE WHICHEVER OF YE DOTH ACCEPT HIS CHALLENGE!

LOGI? HIS NAME BE *AKIN* TO MINE OWN.

FOR THAT REASON, IT MUST BE *LOKI* WHO DOTH CONTEST WITH HIM.

AND HIS *SLIGHT STATURE* HATH *NAUGHT* TO DO WITH THY SUDDEN COURAGE, EH, HALF-BROTHER?

HAH! ALONGSIDE *LOKI'S* HUNGER GAUNT ONE--

SILENCE! HE WHO DOTH DEVOUR THE *GREATER* PORTION OF YONDER MEAL SHALL BE THE VICTOR!

--THINE *OWN* SHALL BE AS THE *GNAT* TO THE *LEVIATHAN*.

LOOK THEE!

OF THIS *BANQUET* SO MAGICALLY CONJURED-UP, I EAT *EVERY MORSEL*-- DRINK *EVERY DROP*!

WHO CAN HOPE TO BEST *THAT*?

"BUT, WHEN THE GIANT *UTGARD* CREATED A *SECOND* MEAL, EQUAL TO THE FIRST--

GODS AND GOBLINS! THAT SKIN-AND-BONES DEVOURS *ALL*-- EVEN THE WOODEN *PLATES* AND OAKEN *TABLE*!

SURELY, THIS BE *SORCERY* UNFETTERED!

THOU SHOULDST HAVE YIELDED THE FIRST CONTEST TO *THOR*, LOKI.

ARE YOU READY TO ADMIT DEFEAT-- AND ACCEPT IMPRISONMENT?

OR WILL ONE OF YE RUN A *RACE* FOR ME?

I SHALL--

NAY! LOKI WOULD *REDEEM* HIM-SELF-- AND MY *SWIFTNESS* DOTH OUTSTRIP EVEN MY FORMER *HUNGER*.

THEN BEGIN THE RACE WHEN THOU *WILT*, ASGARDIAN!

BY THE BY-- *HUGI* BE MY NAME.

THOU ART MINE *OPPONENT!?*

SURELY, THIS BE SOME MAMMOTH--

--JEST.

AND 'TIS UPON **THEE** THAT IT BE PLAYED, GODLING.

HUGI BE SO FLEET OF FOOT THAT HE HATH COMPLETED THE RACE ALMOST BE-FORE THOU HAST BEGUN!

TAKE CARE, GIANT! THOU HAST HUMBLED *LOKI*-- BUT WHAT *GOD OF ASGARD* HATH NOT DONE THE *SAME*, AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER?

HOW WILL THY CHAMPIONS FARE 'GAINST THE *LORD OF THE LIVING LIGHTNING?*

WE SHALL SOON SEE, ARROGANT MITE!

BEHOLD NOW THAT WHICH I DO PLACE BEFORE THEE--!

A GIGANTIC *HORN*-- WHOSE END DOTH EX-TEND EVEN *BEYOND* THIS CASTLE!

AYE! A HORN FILLED WITH WATER!

DRAIN IT DRY-- AND EVEN I SHALL SING THY PRAISES!

"NEXT MOMENT, I-- WHO HAVE THE LUSTIEST *THIRST* IN ALL ASGARD--SET THE GREAT HORN TO MY *LIPS*...

"*THRICE* DID I STRIVE, MIGHTILY, WITH GREATER EFFORT THAN EVER *BE-FORE*--

"BUT, IN THE *END*...

HAH! THOU WERT NO MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN *I*, BRAGGART!

THE HORN BE NEARLY AS *FULL* AS WHEN I *BEGAN!*

VERILY, THE *HEAVENS* THEMSELVES MUST BE AGHAST AT SUCH MONUMENTAL *MOCKERY!*

IF THOU WOULDST SEEK TO *ENCHAIN* US ON THE BASIS OF SUCH A *FALSE TEST*--THEN *BEWARE*, UTGARD!

THOR DOTH *NOT* ACCEPT IT AS A *TRUE AND PROPER DEFEAT.*

STILL SO CERTAIN OF THY PROWESS, EH, GODLING?

VERY WELL, THEN! I SHALL GIVE THEE A SIMPLER TASK--

--ONE WHICH SHOULD BE CHILD'S PLAY, EVEN FOR SUCH AS THEE.

LIFT YONDER HOUSECAT OFF THE FLOOR, AND GO FREE!

WHY COULD NOT *LOKI* HAVE BEEN GIVEN SUCH EASY LABOR, INSTEAD OF MORE *ARDUOUS* TASKS?

MERELY THANK THY *STARS OF FORTUNE*, LOKI, THAT WE SHALL SOON BE--

--GONE?

ODIN'S BRISTLING BEARD! TRY THOUGH I *MAY*-- WITH SUCH STRENGTH AS HATH TOPPLED *TITAN* AND *TROLL*--

--I CAN LIFT BUT *ONE PAW* OF THE CAT OFF THE *FLOOR!*

SURELY THIS PLACE HATH *DRAINED* MY POWERS, IN SOME MANNER.

'TIS WORTH MINE *OWN* HUMILIATION, STORM-BRINGER, TO SEE *THEE* HUMBLED AT LAST!

FOOL! IF *THOR* DOTH FALL-- CAN *LOKI* LONG BE STANDING?

UTGARD! THOU DIDST SAY *FIVE* CONTESTS, GIANT--

MEWW

WHAT BE THE *FINAL* TEST?

BY FAR THE EASIEST OF ALL!

AND, BECAUSE I WISH TO BE GENEROUS TO SUCH LESSER BEINGS AS YOURSELVES, THIS DO I SWEAR:

DEFEAT EVEN THIS ONE CHALLENGER, AND YE STILL SHALL GO YOUR WAY IN PEACE!

MOTHER! COME FORTH AND SHOW THESE UPSTARTS THE TRUE POWER OF THOSE WHO DWELL IN UTGARDHALL!

WHAT? DOTH HE NOW SEND OLD WOMEN AGAINST US?

STAND ASIDE, THOR, AND LET LOKI--

I SAY THEE NAY! I'LL NOT HAVE YOU HARM THOSE GREY HAIRS, IN THY FEAR OF IMPRISONMENT.

COME WITH ME WILLINGLY, WOMAN, AND NO ONE SHALL--

BY THE GIRTH OF VOLSTAGG! SHE BE AS IMMOVABLE AS WAS THE CAT!

OH, I AM A WEE BIT STRONGER THAN IT WAS, LAD...

...OR HADST THOU NOT NOTICED?

HER GRIP!! 'TIS BEYOND ALL BELIEVING!

I-- CANNOT BREAK FREE!

EVEN LOKI STANDS IN AWE! MIGHTY THOR-- BROUGHT TO HIS KNEES BY AN AGED CRONE!?

I THANK THE NORN-FATES THAT MINE ALL-FATHER ODIN BE NOT HERE TO SEE HIS SON'S INGLORIOUS DEFEAT!

MOMENT BY MOMENT-- I GROW WEAKER-- MORE FAINT! I--

ENOUGH!

RELEASE HIM, MOTHER, AND BEGONE-- FOR, THEY ARE NOW UTGARD'S TO DEAL WITH!

SO WE ARE, GIANT--

BUT, I REMAIN DEFIANT TO MY LAST IMMORTAL BREATH!

THOUGH THY MIGHT MAY INDEED BE GREATER THAN MINE, STILL I SHALL FIGHT ON TO THE DEATH-- AS BEFITS A TRUE SCION OF ASGARD!

--AT LEAST SO LONG AS THOR DOTH STAND!

AND ;ULP!; LOKI SHALL OPPOSE THEE STILL, AS WELL--

YOU WOULD STRIVE ON, AGAINST ALL ODDS-- E'EN AFTER YOUR FIVE DEFEATS ?

THEN, I HAVE WRONGED YE BOTH-- AND MAYHAP 'TIS TIME TO REVEAL THE TRUTH.

TRUTH? WHAT--?

FIRST, KNOW THAT I, UTGARD, AM ALSO SKRYMIR, WHOM THOU DIDST ENCOUNTER IN THE FOREST...

"THE **BAG** YE SOUGHT IN VAIN TO OPEN, IN SEARCH OF FOOD, WAS SEALED BY **MAGIC**, OF A SORT NO GOD NOR GIANT COULD UNDO.

"AND, WHEN THOU, THUNDERER, DIDST STRIKE AT SLEEPING 'SKRYMIR' WITH THY MYSTIC MALLET--

"--'TWAS NOT MY HEAD THOU DIDST STRIKE, BUT A **MOUNTAIN**, WHICH WAS DULY SHATTERED...!

"AGAIN, MINE OWN **MAGIC** KEPT FROM THEE KNOW-LEDGE OF WHAT HAD TRANSPIRED.

THEN-- WE HAVE BEEN *ENCHANTED*, ALL ALONG-- AND SAW *NOT* WHAT WE THOUGHT?

THOU HAST SAID IT.

BUT **WHY** DIDST THOU TRICK THOR SO?

HIS DECEPTION WAS NO MORE COMPLETE THAN THINE OWN, WHINER.

THOU DIDST THINK TO **OUT-EAT** THE GAUNT LOGI--

BUT, NEITHER WAS **HE** WHAT HE SEEMED...

"THOU DIDST CONTEST NOT WITH A LIVING THING-- BUT WITH **FIRE** IT-SELF, WHICH CONSUMED FOOD AND PLATES AND ALL!

"FOR, WHO CAN DEVOUR THINGS BETTER THAN FIRE?

"NOR WAS **HUGI** A MERE SWAIN, AS HE APPEARED...

"...BUT YOUR OWN **THOUGHTS**, WHICH FLY AT A SPEED BEYOND ALL RECKONING.

"NOT LIGHTNING ITSELF CAN OUTSTRIP THE POWER OF THOUGHT.

"AND THOU, GOD OF STORMS, DIDST BROOD BECAUSE THOU COULDST NOT LOWER THE LEVEL OF WATER IN MINE ENORMOUS HORN.

"LITTLE DIDST THOU SUSPECT--

"--THAT THE HORN'S NETHER END WAS SET IN THE GREAT **OCEAN** ITSELF!

"IN FACT, THOU DIDST LOWER THE LEVEL OF THE WATERS DOWN TO EBB-TIDE!

"AND THE CAT THOU DIDST STRIVE TO LIFT WAS NO CAT AT ALL--

"--BUT THE GARGANTUAN **MIDGARD SERPENT** WHICH GIRDLES THE EARTH AND HOLDS THE SEA IN PLACE!

"HOW I DID INWARDLY TREMBLE WHEN THOU DIDST LIFT THE CREATURE ALL UNKNOWING, EVEN THE SLIGHTEST BIT!"

"**LOKI** ASKED THEE," SAYS THOR, "AND NOW **I** ASK THEE: **WHY** DIDST THOU TRICK THUS OUR SIGHT AND SENSES?"

WHY? BECAUSE I DESIRED TO TEST THE METTLE AND MERIT OF YE GODS!

IF YE WERE NOT STRONG OR BRAVE ENOW TO STAND, **WE GIANTS** WOULD INVADE ASGARD AT ONCE--

--AND THE DREADED DAY OF **RAGNAROK** WOULD OCCUR MILLENNIA SOONER THAN THE NORN-FATES PREDICT!

"WHEN YE FOUGHT ON, EVEN IN THE FACE OF FOUR DEFEATS, I SENT OLD **ELLI** AGAINST THEE...

"UNKNOWN TO THEE, SHE DID **AGE** THEE... AND THUS WEAKEN THEE!

"ELLI, SHE WHO IS THE PERSONIFICATION OF **OLD AGE** ITSELF!

"STILL THOU WOULDST NOT SURRENDER-- AND THUS, IN A SENSE, THOU DIDST **WIN**, NOT LOSE, THE ENCOUNTER.

"THY RIGHTFUL STATE DID RETURN, THE MOMENT OLD ELLI LEFT THEE...

THUS, YE BOTH HAVE PROVEN THY GODLY RACE WORTHY TO RULE THE COSMOS-- AT LEAST FOR THIS PRESENT AGE-- AND MAY DEPART IN PEACE!

THOU WOULDST **TRICK** US, THEN **DISMISS** US-- LIKE **SCUM** BENEATH THY FEET?

A THOUSAND TIMES **NAY!**

LET THERE NOW BE **TRUE BATTLE** BETWEEN US-- **NO MORE MAGIC!**

MINE ENCHANTMENTS WILL NO LONGER PREVAIL, NOW THAT THOU ART AWARE OF THEM!

THUS, LET THE **FINAL**, REMAINING MAGIC BE DISPELLED--

--THE ENCHANTMENT WHICH BE **UTGARDHALL** ITSELF!

"BEFORE I COULD WIELD MINE AWESOME **HAMMER**, THERE WAS SUDDENLY A **BLINDING** BURST OF LIGHT--

BY ALL THE IMMORTALS!

"AND, WHEN OUR **SIGHT** RETURNED TO US--

YET, **UTGARD** HIMSELF WAS REAL ENOW-- AYE, AND HIS **SIZE** AND **POWER!**

HAD WE BUT **FALTERED**, THEN TRULY WOULD THE **TWILIGHT OF THE GODS** HAVE FALLEN AT ONCE OVER FAIR **ASGARD!**

THUNDERER! THE CASTLE BE **GONE**-- E'EN THE MIGHTY **FOREST** WHICH DID SURROUND IT!

THUS, IN A WAY, WE **DID** DEFEAT THE GIANT-- AND **YET**--

MAYHAP IT WERE **NEVER THERE**, EVIL ONE.

MAY THIS DAY'S EVENTS E'ER **REMIND** ME THAT, STRONG THOUGH MINE ARM AND HAMMER BE, THERE STILL BE A **BILLION BILLION WORLDS AND BEINGS** BEYOND MY YOUTHFUL KEN.

AND **WHO** IS SO GREAT, SO MIGHTY, THAT SOME DAY, **SOMEWHERE**, HE WILL NOT MEET HIS **MASTER?**

THUS IS IT **WRITTEN**--

--THUS SHALL IT EVER *BE!*

IS THAT ANYTHING LIKE "THEY LIVED *HAPP'LY EVER AFTER*"?

AYE. AND HAST THOU *LEARNED* ANYTHING FROM MY TALE, JOEY?

YEAH, I... I THINK MAYBE I *DID.*

WHATSAT, KID? YOU GONNA WAIT'LL YER *BIG* ENUFF TA *LICK THAT BULLY* THOR CHASED AWAY?

THAT AIN'T THE POINT'A THE STORY.

EVEN IF I *DO* BEAT 'IM UP SOMETIME, THERE'LL ALWAYS BE *SOMEBODY,* SOMEWHERE, WHO'S *STRONGER'N* ME.

SO I'M JUST GONNA WORK ON *TAKIN' CARE* OF MYSELF...

...AND KEEP ON PUTTIN' *ONE* DAY RIGHT AFTER THE *OTHER.*

JOEY, THOU ART *WISE* BEYOND THY YEARS.

WELL, *SEE* YA, THOR.

LIKE THEY SAY-- THE *FORCE* BE WITH YOU!

AND WITH *THEE,* LAD... *WHAT-E'ER* THOU DOST MEAN.

NOW, THERE BE MATTERS *ELSEWHERE* THAT I MUST--

THOR! HOLD IT, OLD BUDDY!

I'VE BEEN *LOOKING ALL OVER* FOR YOU, FOR *WEEKS!*

EH? VERILY, THOU DOST LOOK *FAMILIAR,* BUT--

IT'S *HOBBSIE,* DON'T YOU *REMEMBER?*--

--*HARRIS HOBBS*-- THE GUY YOU TOOK UP TO *ASGARD* SEVERAL YEARS BACK, WHEN I WAS JUST A HUMBLE *REPORTER!**

AH *YES!* THOU HAS AGED *GRACEFULLY,* OLD FRIEND.

YEAH! WELL, I'M IN *TV NEWS* NOW-- AND I NEED A *FAVOR.*

*EPOCHAL EVENTS RECORDED IN *JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY* #123, 'WAY BACK WHEN.
--ROY.

IF 'TIS WITHIN MY *POWER* TO GRANT.

IT SURE *IS,* OL' BUDDY! I'VE PROMISED MY *NETWORK* THAT I'M GONNA SHOOT THE FIRST *TV SPECIAL* EVER ABOUT YOU REAL-LIFE *NORSE GODS*--

--AND I'M GONNA DO IT ON LOCATION-- IN *ASGARD!*

NEXT ISSUE: **SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW BRIDGE!**

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THE MIGHTY

THOR ®

THE MONSTER WHOSE MAMMOTH COILS CAN CRUSH THE EARTH!! THE MIDGARD SERPENT!

STRIKE, O' DEVOURER OF WORLDS!

EITHER THOU OR THOR SHALL DIE THIS DAY!

When DR. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking-stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic hammer MJOLNIR—and the lame physician is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm, Lord of the Living Lightning—and heir to the throne of eternal Asgard....

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!™

ROY THOMAS WRITER/EDITOR | JOHN BUSCEMA & TOM PALMER ARTISTS/STORYTELLERS | JOE ROSEN, LETTERER G. ROUSSOS, COLORIST | JIM SHOOTER CONSULTING EDITOR

SOMEWHERE... OVER THE RAINBOW BRIDGE!

BY ODIN'S SACRED SCEPTRE! DID MINE EARS HEAR THEE *A'RIGHT*, HARRIS HOBBS?

THOU DOST DESIRE TO JOURNEY ONCE MORE TO ETERNAL *ASGARD*--TO FILM A *TELEVISION PROGRAM!?* *

YOUR EARS ARE DARN NEAR AS GOOD AS YOUR PAL *HEIMDALL'S*, OLD BUDDY.

LIKE I SAID, I'VE PROMISED MY *NETWORK* THAT I'D SHOOT THE FIRST *TV SPECIAL* EVER MADE OF THE REAL-LIFE *NORSE GODS*...

... AND *NATURALLY*, I INTEND TO DO IT *ON LOCATION!*

*TV NEWSMAN *HARRIS HOBBS* LAID THIS VERBAL BOMBSHELL ON OUR HALCYON HERO *LAST ISH*. --ROY.

C-885

INTEND WHATE'ER THOU *WILT*, MAN OF MIDGARD,

NO MAN DOTH COMMAND THE *GOD OF THUNDER*-- NAY, NOT E'EN WHEN HE HATH *PHOTOGRAPHIC PROOF* OF MY EARTHBOUND *SECRET IDENTITY.**

NOW *THAT'S* HITTING BELOW THE *BIBLE BELT*, THOR! I PROMISED TO *DESTROY* THAT PHOTO, AFTER YOU TOOK ME TO ASGARD *YEARS* AGO...

...AND I *DID!*

*ISSUE #123 'WAY BACK WHEN.--R.T.

THIS ISN'T *BLACKMAIL*, MAN-- JUST A HEARTFELT *REQUEST* FROM A GUY YOU USED TO KNOW, AND WHO NEEDS A *FAVOR*.

A FAVOR *NOT* WHOLLY MINE TO *GRANT*.

DOST THOU TRULY THINK THAT ALL-FATHER *ODIN* WOULD GIVE HIS CONSENT TO SUCH A SCHEME?

HE JUST *MIGHT*-- IF YOU PUT IN A GOOD WORD FOR ME!

LOOK, EVER SINCE I HEARD YOU WERE BACK ON EARTH, I'VE HAD A *CAMERA-MAN* AND *SOUND-MAN* STANDING BY, AND--

UH OH! GETTING *CROWDED* AROUND HERE.

ISN'T THERE SOMEPLACE WE COULD *GO*-- SOME-PLACE MORE *PRIVATE*?

FURTHER CONVERSATION WILL AVAIL THEE *NAUGHT*, FRIEND HOBBS.

STILL, MY *CURIOSITY* DOTH URGE ME TO *HEAR THEE OUT.* THUS...

STAND YE *BACK*, MORTALS OF MANHATTAN!

THOR MUST TAKE HIS *LEAVE.*

BLACKOUTS-- SNOWSTORMS-- AND NOW *THIS!*

OHHHH--!

AS SOON AS I CATCH MY *HAT*, I'M HOT-FOOTIN' IT BACK TO *DES MOINES!*

NOW *COME*, HARRIS HOBBS!

MINE ENCHANTED *HAMMER* WILL PROPEL US TO A MORE *SECLUDED* CORNER OF THIS O'ERCROWDED CITY.

TH-THANKS, THUNDER GOD... I THINK!

SPEAK THY PIECE QUICKLY, OLD FRIEND.

THOR CANNOT TARRY LONG.

YET, ONE THING I MUST KNOW...

WHAT DOST THOU REMEMBER OF THAT TRIP TO ASGARD SO LONG AGO?

I USED MAGIC TO MAKE THEE FORGET ITS SIGHTS, FOR THE SAKE OF THY SANITY, DID I NOT?

WAIT'LL... I CATCH... MY BREATH, OKAY...?

WHEW! YOU CHANGE LOCALES FASTER THAN FRED SILVERMAN SWITCHES NETWORKS!

YES, I FORGOT MY STAY IN ASGARD, ALL RIGHT--WENT BACK TO MY NEWSPAPER JOB, AND LATER BECAME A TV ANCHORMAN.

REMEMBER WHAT YOU TOLD ME THAT DAY, THOUGH?

"SOME NIGHTS, IN YOUR SLEEP, WHEN YOU THINK YOUR DREAMS ARE MERELY DREAMS... THERE WILL BE SOME SMALL PART OF YOU THAT... KNOWS!"*

*CHECK IT OUT, --RASCALLY.

"WELL, FOR YEARS, I IGNORED THE FEW DREAM-IMAGES OF THE ASGARDIAN GODS THAT I COULD RECALL WHEN I AWOKE.

"THEN, ONE NIGHT I WOKE UP SCREAMING.

"IT HAPPENED MORE THAN ONCE... A LOT MORE!

"NATURALLY, I DID WHAT ANY TWENTIETH-CENTURY MALE IN MY POSITION WOULD DO: I WENT TO A SHRINK!

...SO YOU SEE, DOC, THESE AREN'T JUST REGULAR NIGHTMARES.

I WAS IN THIS "ASGARD" PLACE ONCE! I KNOW I WAS!

TAKEN THERE BY THE FABLED THOR HIMSELF, I BELIEVE YOU SAID?

CHECK! ONLY HE MADE ME FORGET THE WHOLE THING, AND--

YOUR EXPERIENCE IS QUITE COMMON, MR. HOBBS... A COMPENSATORY RELEASE FOR THE DAY-TO-DAY PRESSURES OF YOUR JOB.

STILL, AS PER YOUR REQUEST, I SHALL HYPNOTIZE YOU, IF YOU INSIST.

FOR FIFTY BUCKS AN HOUR, HE OUGHT TO STAND ON HIS HEAD IF I ASKED HIM TO!

...SLEEP, HARRIS HOBBS... YOU ARE GETTING DROWZY... SLEEP...

YES... SLEEP...

NOW, TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE IN THESE RECURRING NIGHTMARES, THAT YOU CAN ONLY HALF-RECALL WHEN YOU AWAKEN!

I SEE... THE SKY-GOD CALLED ODIN... AND ONE OTHER.

HE... IS CALLED... CRUSHER CREEL... ALSO THE ABSORBING MAN...

WHO DARES INVADE THE SANCTUM OF ODIN, THE ALL-WISE?

SO YOU'RE THE GUY I CAME HERE TA OVERTHROW?

YOU DON'T LOOK SO TOUGH TO ME!

"I SEE IT SO CLEARLY, THOR-- EVEN NOW--

"CREEL COULD GROW-- AND ABSORB THE POWER INHERENT IN ANYTHING HE TOUCHED, RIGHT?

"LATER, THOUGH, IT TURNED OUT YOUR OLD MAN WAS JUST TOYING WITH HIM AND HIS PAL LOKI.

"ONLY, I'M NOT TOO SURE ABOUT THE DETAILS...

"...BECAUSE, NEXT THING I KNOW, YOU WERE DIGGING ME OUT OF THE RUINS, AND--

THOU WERT RENDERED UNCONSCIOUS BY THE FORCE OF THE ABSORBING MAN'S CYCLONIC BOLTS, HARRIS HOBBS.

Y-YOU MEAN-- IT'S OVER?? I MISSED THE WHOLE THING!?

"NEXT, I REMEMBER BIG-DADDY ODIN ORDERING YOU TO GET ME OUT OF ASGARD...

"...WHICH YOU DID, WITH THAT NUTTY CROQUET-MALLET OF YOURS.

"YEAH! SUDDENLY, ON THE SHRINK'S COUCH, I REMEMBERED IT ALL: THE RAINBOW BRIDGE, THE IMMORTALS OF ASGARD-- EVERYTHING!!

"I'D BEEN SITTING ON THE SCOOP OF THE CENTURY-- FOR MORE THAN A DECADE.

"BACK AT THE NET-WORK LATER THAT DAY, MY SUPERIORS WERE PRETTY SKEPTI-CAL AT FIRST-- BUT, WITH US RUNNING A POOR THIRD IN THE NIELSENS, THEY WERE READY TO LISTEN TO ANYTHING...!

...AND, IF A PRIME-TIME SPECIAL FILMED IN ASGARD DOESN'T GIVE US A CLEAN SWEEP DURING RATINGS WEEK, THEN YOU CAN GET YOURSELF A NEW ANCHORMAN!

THAT GOES WITHOUT SAYING, HARRIS, OLD CHUM.

YOU GET US ASGARD-- AND WE FORGET OUR PLAN TO ASK ROSALYN AND BILLY CARTER TO BE OUR NEW ANCHORPERSONS!

SO THAT'S WHAT IT'S *COME* TO, THOR.

IF YOU CAN'T GET ME INTO ASGARD WITH A *CAMERA CREW*, I'M ALL *WASHED UP* IN BROADCASTING.

THY WORDS AROUSE MY *PITY*, HARRIS HOBBS...

BUT, AGAIN-- THY WISH BE NOT *MINE* TO GRANT! AND *NOW*--

THEN--YOU WON'T LIFT A *FINGER* FOR MY PROJECT?

I SHALL SPEAK OF IT TO THE *ALL-FATHER* WHEN NEXT I TREAD THE *REALM ETERNAL*.

YET, HE DOUBTLESS SHALL SAY THEE *NAY*.

NOW, THERE BE A *MISSION* I MUST UNDERTAKE.

THOU SHALT HEAR FROM ME *ANON*...PERHAPS.

WAIT!

WAIT...

HE'S *GONE*--AND WITH HIM, MY *LAST CHANCE*.

NOBODY ELSE WILL EVEN *BELIEVE* I WAS EVER IN ASGARD.

I BELIEVE, HARRIS HOBBS.

HUH? WHO IN *BLAZES*--?

FORGET MY NAME, FOR NOW!

I KNOW WHO *YOU* ARE; LET THAT BE *ENOUGH* FOR YOU.

HOW DID YOU GET *UP* HERE, WITHOUT *THOR* SENSING--?

ALL THAT *MATTERS* IS THAT I *BELIEVE* YOUR STORY, EVEN IF THE HAUGHTY *THUNDER GOD* DID NOT.

IT HAD THE *RING OF TRUTH* TO IT.

IT *WAS* TRUE--EVERY *WORD* OF IT.

BUT, WHAT'S THE *DIFFER-ENCE?*

THERE'S *NOBODY* ON EARTH THAT CAN POSSIBLY HELP ME... NOBODY BUT *THOR*.

I CAN.

STILL, I SENSE THERE IS *MORE* TO YOUR STORY-- SOMETHING *THOR* DID NOT TAKE THE TIME TO *HEAR*.

YOU'RE *RIGHT*, BUT HOW DID YOU--?

SIMPLY *TELL* IT TO ME, BEFORE I LOSE MY *PATIENCE*.

WHY *NOT*?

I'M *THRU* ANYWAY, SO WHAT CAN IT *HURT*?

"I KEEP SEEING *THOR* ON THE OCEAN SHORE, FACING A *GIANT*...

WELL, *HYMIR*? WHAT SAYEST THOU?

THOU HAST A WISH TO GO *FISHING*, DOST THOU?

VERY WELL, THEN-- BUT WHAT WILT THOU USE AS *BAIT*?

LATELY, I HAVE A *SECOND* DREAM EVERY NIGHT-- JUST AS *VIVID* AS THE OTHER--

LET *THIS* BE MY LURE, GIANT-- TO DRAG FORTH THE *LARGEST, MOST FEARSOME* CREATURE IN ALL THE SEA!

AND WHY DOST *THOU* TAKE THE OARS-- IN *HYMIR'S* BOAT?

BECAUSE TIME IS *FLEETING*, TALL ONE-- THE *SHADOWS* GROW LONG.

AND, *MIGHTY* THOUGH THINE *OWN* ARMS MAY BE--

THE *HEAD* OF THY MOST HUGE *OX*!

--THE ARMS OF THE *SON OF ODIN* ARE MIGHTIER YET, BY *FAR*!

BY YMIR'S FROSTY BEARD!

TOO FAR OUT HAST THOU ROWED, GODLING.

LET THAT BE THOR'S WORRY.

SIMPLY LOWER THE LINE AND BAIT, IN THIS SPOT--

--AND WE SOON SHALL SEE WHAT MANNER OF SEA-THING DOTH TAKE IT.

'TIS AS I DID FEAR, THUNDERER!

THE MIDGARD SERPENT-- HE THAT COILS 'ROUND THE VERY EARTH ITSELF, BENEATH THE SEA!

FOR NONE OTHER DID I CAST MY LINE, GIANT.

THOU ART MAD, THEN!

THE MIDGARD SERPENT IS TOO HUGE AND STRONG E'EN FOR THEE!

SO IT BE SAID IN ASGARD.

I DID JOURNEY HERE--TO PROVE MY FELLOW GODS WRONG.

THEN PROVE IT WITH ANOTHER ON BOARD-- NOT HYMIR!

HALT, GIANT!

NAY! WHEN THIS ENCHANTED LINE BE CUT, THE SERPENT SHALL RETURN TO HIS BRINY LAIR--

AND, I PRAY WE SHALL SEE HIM NO MORE!

BASE VILLAIN! THOU HAST ROBBED ME OF THE FRUITS OF VICTORY!

IN SOOTH, I SAVED THEE FROM THINE OWN FOLLY.

I KNOW WHY THOU DIDST CHALLENGE THE MONSTER-- BUT THOU ART A FOOL, TO TRY TO CHEAT THE NORN-FATES WHICH--

SILENCE!

THOR WILL BROOK NARY ANOTHER OF THINE INSULTS!

THROK!

ROW THYSELF BACK TO SHORE-- AND BE GRATEFUL THAT THOR DOTH LET THEE LIVE!

FOR, IN SAVING THE DREADED MIDGARD SERPENT, THOU KNOWEST FULL WELL WHAT THOU HAST DONE...!

WELL, MAYBE HE KNOWS, BUT THIS MEDIA-TYPE PERSON SURE DOESN'T!

DO YOU, STRANGER?

AYE, MORTAL! THAT I MOST ASSUREDLY DO!

HUH. YOUR VOICE--YOUR WORDS-- THEY'RE DIFFERENT NOW, SOMEHOW! THEY--

WHY SHOULD THEY NOT BE DIFFERENT?

WHEN THOU BEGAN THY TALE, I WAS BUT A POOR, POWERLESS WAYFARER UPON THIS PITEOUS PLANET.

NOW THAT THOU HAST FINISHED, I AM ABLE TO ASSUME MY TRUE FORM AT LAST, AS--

--LOKI, GOD OF EVIL!

LOKI!? I--I REMEMBER SEEING YOU BEFORE-- IN ASGARD--!

BUT, I STILL DON'T GET IT.

'TIS NOT FOR SUCH AS THEE TO "GET," MORTAL.

DOST THOU STILL WISH TO HIE THEE TO ASGARD?

DO I! I'D GIVE MY RIGHT ARM TO--

NO SUCH PERSONAL SACRIFICE IS NEEDFUL.

MERELY GATHER UP THE *OTHER* MORTALS THOU DIDST SPEAK OF BEFORE, AND *REJOIN* ME HERE.

CHECK!

HARRIS HOBBS-- BACK IN *ASGARD* AGAIN!

THIS'LL BE THE SHOW OF THE *CENTURY!*

THOU ART A *DOLT,* MIDGARDIAN-- THY MIND *TOO SMALL* TO KNOW THE TRUE *IMPLICATIONS* OF THINE ACT!

THE *"SHOW"* YOU SHALL WITNESS WILL BE THY *LAST--*

--THINE, AND THE *UNIVERSE'S!*

THERE BE THE *STRUCTURE* I SEEK--

STARK INTERNATIONAL.

BUT, *HOLO!* WHO ART *THOU?*

BE THIS *NOT* THE PRIVATE OFFICE OF *ANTHONY STARK?**

I- IT SURE *IS...*

*ALIAS *IRON MAN.* --ROY.

...AND I *DON'T* NEED A SCORECARD TO TELL WHO *YOU* ARE, THUNDER GOD-- OR MAY I CALL YOU *THOR?*

THOU MAYEST,

THE BOSS-MAN WAS CALLED AWAY ON *BUSINESS*-- HE AND HIS PERSONAL BODYGUARD, *IRON MAN.*

I'M *WILSON TRAVERS.* I'M NEW HERE, BUT HE ASKED ME TO SHOW YOU TO...*IT.*

HE *DIDN'T* FILL ME IN, THOUGH, ON JUST *WHERE* YOU'RE GOING TO *TAKE* THE THING.

TO A PLACE *NEARER* THAN THY HEART'S OWN BEATING...YET *FARTHER* THAN THE MOST DISTANT STAR.

I SEE... I *GUESS.*

WELL, ANYWAY, HERE WE ARE-- THE MOST *RESTRICTED* PART OF STARK INTERNATIONAL.

COME ON *IN*-- AND BELIEVE ME, WE'LL BE GLAD TO BE *RID* OF--

--THIS *COMPUTER* MADE MOSTLY OF *ADAMANTIUM*, THE WORLD'S MOST INDESTRUCTIBLE SUBSTANCE.

AYE-- THE *LAST LEGACY* OF THE ENTITY KNOWN AS *FAUST!* *

AS I UNDERSTAND IT, YOU TOLD MR. STARK YOU'D TAKE IT TO "PERHAPS THE *ONE* PLACE IN THE *UNIVERSE* WHERE IT WILL BE COMPLETELY *SAFE.*"

* SEE #270-271, --R.T.

IS THAT, BY ANY CHANCE, THE *SAME* PLACE YOU WERE JUST *TALKING* ABOUT?

THE SAME.

GREAT! ONLY THING IS, HOW'LL YOU *TRANSPORT* IT THERE-- WHEREVER *"THERE"* IS.

EVEN WITH SOME *INTERNAL COMPONENTS* REMOVED FOR STUDY HERE, IT STILL WEIGHS--

--SEVERAL... TONS.

I DID NOT *HEAR* THEE, MY FRIEND.

WERT THOU *SAYING* SOMETHING?

UH-- *YEAH!* I WAS JUST ABOUT TO--

GUARD! OPEN THE *BIG DOOR*-- AND *HURRY UP* ABOUT IT!

WE'RE *COMING THRU!*

HOLY COW! I'VE SEEN THE BOSS' PAL *IRON MAN* LIFT SOME PRETTY HEAVY STUFF-- BUT *THIS*--!

HEY! ALLUVA SUDDEN, HE *STOPPED SHORT.*

LET'S JUST BE *GLAD* HE'S TAKING THAT BAD-NEWS HUNK OF METAL *OFF OUR HANDS.*

G53-P2

WHAT'S *WRONG*, BIG FELLA? YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'VE JUST SEEN A *GHOST.*

NAY, MORTAL! MINE EYES DO FALL UPON THAT WHICH BE DEADLIER FAR THAN ANY PALLID SPIRIT.

LOOK THEE SKYWARD, AND BEHOLD--

--THE DREADED MIDGARD SERPENT!

JEHOSEPHAT.

TH-THAT THING-- IT'S FILLING THE WHOLE SKY--

--AND NOW IT'S SWOOPING DOWN-- STRAIGHT AT US!

JORMUNGAND!* ONCE BEFORE, IN TIME'S DAWN, THOU DIDST FACE THE WRATH OF THOR.

I FAILED TO SLAY THEE THAT DAY--

AND, IT BE WRITTEN THAT ON THE DREADED DAY OF RAG-NAROK, 'TWILL BE THEE WHO WILL SLAY ME!

*ANOTHER NAME FOR THE MIDGARD SERPENT. --RESEARCHIN' ROY.

BUT THIS DAY I SHALL ATONE FOR THINE EARLIER ESCAPE--

--AND STAVE OFF THE TIME OF THE GOD'S DEATH MAYHAP FOREVER.

SO SAYETH THE FIRSTBORN OF ODIN!

ZIAP!

BY THE LEGIONS OF VALHALLA!

WHAT SORT OF MONSTER GOES "ZAP" WHEN STRUCK BY ALL-DESTROYING MJOLNIR?

I SEEMED TO GO THRU THE CREATURE-- AND STILL IT COILS THERE.

THEN, SOMEHOW, I DID MISS THE MARK.

I SHALL NOT DO SO AGAIN!

HAVE AT THEE, NETHER-DEMON-- ONE LAST TIME!

WITH UNBELIEVABLE FORCE, THE THUNDER GOD HURLS HIMSELF HEADLONG AT THE LOOMING SPECTRE--

--ONLY TO HAVE IT VANISH UTTERLY, AT THE SELFSAME INSTANT THAT HIS FAST-HURTLING URU HAMMER WOULD STRIKE ITS GAPING MAW--

--SO THAT, INSTEAD, THE MYSTIC MALLET PULLS HIM AFTER IT, AT A HURRICANE SPEED AND MOMENTUM---

--WITH RESULTS NOT UNEXPECTED BY THOSE FAMILIAR WITH THE ASGARDIAN'S PAST EXPLOITS!

THRAK!

THRAK!

I WOULD SUSPECT **LOKI'S** FINE HAND IN THIS, SAVE ONLY THAT HE WAS LATELY **STRIPPED** OF ALL HIS POWERS BY THE **ALL-FATHER...**

...AND SENT TO WANDER THE EARTH AS A HOMELESS **DERELICT.** *

*ISH #267 --R.T.

AT LEAST, THIS **SECOND** TIME, JORMUNGAND DID **NOT** RE-MATERIALIZE.

WHEREVER THAT GODZILLA-TYPE WENT, HE SHOULD ONLY **STAY** THERE!

MAYHAP THE ANSWER TO **ALL** OUR QUESTIONS WILL BE FOUND IN HOLY **ASGARD.**

THUS, THERE BE **TWO** PURPOSES NOW TO MY HOMEWARD JOURNEY...

...OR **THREE**, SINCE 'TIS MY FERVENT DESIRE TO GAZE ONCE MORE UPON THE FACE OF MY BELOVED **SIF.**

*ONE MOMENT, A PERFECTLY-DEVELOPED SPECIMEN ATTIRED IN PRIMARY COLORS STANDS BEFORE THE GAPING OFFICIALS OF **STARK INTERNATIONAL...***

*THE NEXT, BOTH **HE** AND ADAMANTINE **COMPUTER** STREAK INTO THE CLOUDLESS **SKY**-- THEN OUT OF SIGHT **ENTIRELY**--*

*--AS THE **TRANS-DIMENSIONAL BARRIER** WHICH SEPARATES EARTH FROM THE GODLY REGIONS IS **BRIDGED...***

*...IN MORE WAYS THAN **ONE.***

HO FRIEND HEIMDALL!

HOW FARES THE **REALM ETERNAL...** AND THY BEAUTEOUS SISTER **SIF...** IN MINE ABSENCE?

BY THE NINE MOTHERS WHO BORE ME!

IN SOOTH, THUNDER GOD, THOU DOST EVER **STUN** ME WITH THE **SUDDENNESS** OF THINE APPEARANCES.

NOT EVEN **HEIMDALL'S** SENSES CAN DETECT THY COMING, ERE THOU STANDEST ON GLEAMING **BIFROST.**

THAT IS *FLATTERING* INDEED, YET, WHAT OF RAVEN-TRESSED *SIF*... AND OF MY *FATHER*?

BOTH HAVE *ABSENTED* THEMSELVES FROM THE REALM SOME DAYS *SINCE*.

I SHALL MERELY BE HERE, THEN, TO HAIL THEIR *RETURN*.

AYE, BUT THERE BE *MORE* I PERHAPS SHOULD HAVE TOLD THEE, SCION OF ODIN.

FOR, THERE WERE *TROUBLED LOOKS* UPON THE FACES OF *BOTH*, AS THEY WENT THEIR SEPARATE WAYS...

...A *GRIMNESS* WHICH, I FEAR, DOTH FORETELL *DARK DAYS* FOR THE HOME OF THE GODS!

*SO **DEEP** IS HEIMDALL'S CONCERN THAT HE DOES NOT EVEN COMMENT UPON THE HUGE MODERN **APPARATUS** WHICH THOR SO EASILY HOISTS...*

*...AND CARRIES INTO THE VERY **CENTER** OF ASGARD ITSELF.*

FANDRAL? HOGUN? AT WHAT DO YOU TWO *STARE* SO LONG AND HARD?

IF THINE EYES COULD LOOK BEYOND THY *MUTTON*, GREAT VOLSTAGG, THOU *TOO* WOULDST SEE WHAT GLADDENS EVEN *MY* HEART.

'TIS *THOR*-- COME *HOME* AGAIN!

DID *BALDER* HEAR SOMEONE SAY THE NAME OF--

THOR! 'TIS TRULY *THEE!*

DID I NOT *SAY* I WOULD RETURN ERE LONG?

AND WHAT *MARVELS* DIDST THOU PERFORM ON EARTH THESE PAST WEEKS, EH?

FEW, DASHING ONE... AND THOSE *TRIFLING*.*

*THOR, OF COURSE, IS BEING OVERLY *MODEST*... FOR, HE SAVED THE PLANET FROM THE TWIN SCOURGES OF *FAUST* AND THE MADMAN *DAMOCLES*.
--ROY.

BUT, WHERE BE MY *SIRE*... AND MY *BELOVED?*

BOTH *GONE* FROM ASGARD, I FEAR... LEAVING *FANDRAL*, *VOLSTAGG* AND MYSELF IN TEMPORARY COMMAND.

GONE? BUT *WHITHER?*

WOULD THAT THEY HAD *TOLD* US, MY FRIEND.

THIS I *MUST* SAY, HOGUN.

I WAS THE *LAST* TO BID THE ALL-FATHER *FAREWELL* AS HE MOUNTED HIS EIGHT-HOOVED STEED...AND HE LOOKED TO BE *SORE TROUBLED.*

I LIKEWISE KNOW THAT, OF LATE, HE HATH HAD *DREAMS...*

DREAMS, BALDER? WHAT KIND OF--?

VOLSTAGG! KEEP THEE BACK FROM YONDER *DEVICE,* VOLUMINOUS ONE!

I-- WAS BUT *INSPECTING* IT-- TO BE CERTAIN IT HARBORED *NO THREAT* TO THE REALM ETERNAL.

BUT, *TRUTH* TO TELL--

FOR CRIPES' SAKE--!

SPRING!

UH OH!

--I *STILL* DO NOT KNOW!

BY ODIN'S FLOWING *BEARD!*

HARRIS HOBBS-- SECRETED WITHIN A *HIDDEN COMPARTMENT* OF THE COMPUTER!

UH-- *HI* THERE, THOR, OL' BUDDY.

N-NICE TO *SEE* YOU AGAIN, FELLA.

SAVE THY HONEYED WORDS!

WHO BE *THESE TWO*-- AND, IF THINE ANSWER BE WHAT I *SUSPECT*--!

I'M AFRAID YOU *GUESSED* IT, CHUM. THAT'S *RED* AND *JOEY.*

THEY'RE MY *CREW* FOR THAT *SPECIAL* WE, UH, DIS-CUSSED...!

CHARMED.

H'LO.

"DISCUSSED"? AYE... AND THOR DID SAY THEE NAY, DEVIOUS ONE.

YET, THY PERSISTENCE DOTH PUZZLE ME FAR LESS THAN THINE ABILITY TO DECEIVE BOTH MY SENSES-- AND HEIMDALL'S.

WELL, ER, Y'SEE... I'M AFRAID I, UH, CAN'T TAKE ALL THE CREDIT FOR THAT, THOR.

THEN WHO--?

SURELY, VAIN-GLORIOUS ONE, THOU SHOULDST FEEL THE ANSWER IN THY BONES...!

LOKI!

AYE, LOKI-- HE WHO SHOULD RIGHTFULLY BE THE MOST HONORED OF ODIN'S SONS AND HEIRS...

...BUT WHO HATH E'ER BEEN PASSED OVER, IN FAVOR OF ONE WHO SPEAKS WITH THUNDER, NOT WISDOM.

I HAVE RETURNED FROM MINE UNJUST EXILE UPON THE MISERABLE MUDBALL CALLED MIDGARD.*

*EARTH. --ROY.

THAT WE CAN SEE, EVIL ONE... BUT HOW?

ODIN HIMSELF DID TAKE THY GODLY ATTRIBUTES FROM THEE.

AND NOW, BECAUSE OF HARRIS HOBBS, AN EVEN GREATER POWER HATH RESTORED THEM TO ME.

A GREATER POWER THAN ODIN?

THERE BE NONE SUCH!

THOU ART A FOOL, GOLD-MANE.

I DID USE MAGIC BOTH TO SECRETE THE THREE MORTALS WHERE BEFORE THERE HAD BEEN INTRICATE MECHANISMS...

...AND TO BE-FUDDLE BOTH THY SENSES, AND THOSE OF THAT CLOD HEIMDALL.

THEN IT WAS THOU WHO CONJURED UP AN IMAGE OF THE VILE MIDGARD SERPENT TO DISTRACT ME?

BUT, HOW HADST THOU THE POWER--?

ART THOU STILL BLIND, THUNDERER?

THERE BE BUT *ONE THING* MIGHTIER FAR THAN THE *DECREES OF THE ALL-FATHER:*

THE *PROPHECIES OF VOLLA*--WHO ALONE DOTH KNOW AND HATH PREDICTED THE DIRE SECRET OF-- ***RAGNAROK!****

AYE, *RAGNAROK*-- THAT HOUR EVEN WHEN THE *GODS* SHALL DIE, BENEATH THE COMBINED FORCES OF *GIANTS, TROLLS, MIDGARD SERPENT*--AND *LOKI!*

NOW DO YE SEE, DOLTS?

HARRIS HOBBS SAW *VISIONS* OF THOR'S LONG-AGO BATTLE WITH THE *MIDGARD SERPENT*-- VISIONS HE COULD *NOT* HAVE SEEN, E'EN IN DREAMS, EXCEPT HE BE *DIVINELY INSPIRED* BY THE SPIRIT OF MAD *VOLLA!*

THUS, I BROUGHT HIM TO *ASGARD*-- BOTH TO *PROVE* TO YE ALL THAT THE *PROPHECIES OF DOOM* DO SPEAK THRU HIM--

--AND SO THAT HE MAY *FILM* HIS OWN DEATH, AND THAT OF THE *UNIVERSE!*

OFTTIMES HATH IT BEEN SAID THAT "*RAGNAROK IS COMING*"--AND THE NIGHTMARE NE'ER HATH COME *TRUE.*

BUT *THIS* TIME, FEAR NOT-- **RAGNAROK DOTH COME!!**

THE *TWILIGHT OF THE GODS*-- THE *END OF ALL THAT IS!*

* SEE ISSUE *200. --ROY.

THEN, LOKI STANDS *SILENT* AND NO ONE SPEAKS...FOR A *VERY LONG TIME...!*

BUT FIRST: **DEATH** *COMES FOR* **BALDER!**

THOR ®

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THE MIGHTY

THOR ®

BALDER THE BRAVE IS DEAD!

NOW, NO POWER ON *EARTH* OR IN *ASGARD* CAN HALT THE *DEADLY DAY OF* ***RAGNAROK!***

When DR. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking-stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic hammer MJOLNIR— and the lame physician is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm, Lord of the Living Lightning— and heir to the throne of eternal Asgard....

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!™

THE EYE... AND THE ARROW!

THEY'RE JUST A TRIO OF **MORTALS** FROM **MIDGARD***--WHO STOWED AWAY INSIDE A **COMPUTER** SO THEY COULD GET TO **ASGARD** TO FILM A **TV SPECIAL.**

BUT, NOW THAT THEY'RE **HERE**, THEY'RE NOT EXACTLY FINDING THE REALM ETERNAL A **BED OF RHINE-MAIDENS...!**

HEAR THE WORDS OF **LOKI**, YE WITLESS ASGARDIAN **FOOLS!**

RAGNAROK COMES--THAT DAY WHEN E'EN THE **GODS** SHALL DIE--

--AND NEITHER **MAN** NOR **IMMORTAL** MAY PREVENT ITS COMING!

*EARTH--R.T.

C911

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INGLORIOUS *CHURL!* CURSED BE THE DAY THAT THE *ALL-FATHER* DID UNWISELY TAKE THEE TO HIS *BOSOM!*

IN THAT HOUR, HE DID NURTURE THE BASEST OF *VIPERS!*

I BUT SPEAK THE *TRUTH*, DEAR "BROTHER"...

I KNOW FULL WELL THAT *RAGNAROK*-- THE *TWILIGHT OF THE GODS*-- HATH NEARLY OCCURRED *SEVERAL* TIMES IN THE PAST--

--WHEN *ODIN* SLEPT, OR VANISHED-- OR THE *ODIN-SWORD* WAS NIGH PULLED FROM ITS SCABBARD.

THIS TIME, HOWEVER, ASGARD BE *TRULY* DOOMED-- I FEEL IT IN MY *MARROW*--

--AND, VERILY, *NOT ONE* OF YE WHO STANDS BEFORE ME NOW-- NOT MIGHTY *THOR*, OR DASHING *FANDRAL*, OR GRIM *HOGUN*, OR VALIANT *BALDER*-- SHALL *SURVIVE* ITS HEADLONG FALL!

FOR LONG MOMENTS, THE ASGARDIANS STAND IN STUNNED *SILENCE*...

AS, NEARBY...

THAT GUY PLAYS FOR *KEEPS*, HARRIS.*

WHAT'D YOU LET US *IN* FOR, LETTING THAT *LOKI* GUY SNEAK US UP HERE WHEN THE WHOLE MAGILLA'S ABOUT TO GO *BANG!*

GET OFF HIS *BACK*, RED.

NO, JOEY... MAYBE HE'S *RIGHT*...

**HARRIS HOBBS*, TV PRODUCER WHO MASTERMINDED THE SNEAK-SHUTTLE TO ASGARD. --ROY.

I'VE BEEN DOING SOME *CRAMMING* ON *NORSE MYTHOLOGY*, SO MY *SPECIAL* WOULD BE THE BIGGEST THING TO HIT THE TUBE SINCE "*ROOTS*"...

...AND I'M *AFRAID* I'M STARTING TO GET LOKI'S *DRIFT*.

"*RAGNAROK* IS JUST WHAT HE CALLED IT: THE *TWILIGHT* OF THE GODS...

"...THE DAY WHEN ASGARD *TOPPLES*...AND THE NORSE GODS *PERISH!*

"IT WAS *FORE-TOLD* IN NORSE LEGEND HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO-- PERHAPS *THOUSANDS*."

AND SOMEHOW, ***MY DREAMING*** ABOUT THINGS I COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN ABOUT--SUCH AS THE TRUE STORY OF ***THOR***'S EPIC BATTLE WITH THE ***MIDGARD SERPENT****--IS GOING TO ***HELP*** BRING RAGNAROK ABOUT!

HUH? BUT HOW COULD ***YOU*** CAUSE RAGNA-WHATCHACALLIT, MR. H?

FRANKLY, JOEY--I HAVEN'T THE FOGGIEST ***NOTION.***

*LAST ISSUE.--FOOTNOTE-HAPPY ROY.

BUT, AS LONG AS WE'RE ***HERE***, LET'S GET WHAT WE ***CAME*** FOR.

RED--KEEP THAT ***MINI-CAM*** GOING!

ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN NOW THAT ***THOR'S*** GOT HIS DANDER UP.

CHECK!

PERHAPS THOU HAST ***REGAINED*** THE POWERS OF WHICH ***ODIN*** STRIPPED THEE, EVIL ONE...

BUT STILL ***THOR*** DOTH POSSESS POWER ENOW TO ***HURL*** THEE BODILY FROM ASGARD!

THOU SHALT BEHOLD HOW ***INEFFECTUAL*** BE THY MUCH-VAUNTED MIGHT, THUNDER GOD...

...WHEN ***LOKI*** BE NO MORE THAN ***WISPS OF SMOKE***, BEYOND THY REACH!

BEYOND ***THOR'S*** REACH?

I SAY THEE--***NEVER!***

THRAK!--

NOT WHILST MYSTIC ***MJOLNIR*** MAY SPEED FROM MY HAND AS SWIFT AS ***LIGHT*** ITSELF!

MORTAL DOLT! GET THAT ***CAMERA*** AWAY FROM ME!

NOT ON YOUR ***LIFE***, SMILEY.

I CAN SMELL A ***NEWS-EMMY*** IN THE MAKING FOR THE OL' ***REDHEAD!***

I DID *NOT* BRING THEE HERE TO FILM *MY* DOWN-FALL--BUT THE PRE-ORDAINED DOOM OF *OTHERS!*

YET, LOKI MUST REMAIN *FREE*--THAT HE MAY *ENJOY* HIS COMING TRIUMPH, *THUS--!*

A FLASH OF SUDDEN *LIGHT* MOMENTARILY BLINDS ALL WHO WATCH--

--AND, A SECOND LATER, A PARTICULARLY LOATHESOME-LOOKING *RODENT* SCURRIES FEARFULLY FOR THE NEAREST *SHELTER.*

THERE HE BE!!

HE HATH *ESCAPED* THEE, THOR--BENEATH YON *ODIN-IMAGE.*

WHAT, FRIEND BALDER?

DOST THOU *DOUBT* THAT I CAN LIFT A MERE *STATUE OF STONE?*

NAY! 'TIS *FOR-BIDDEN...!*

AS IT WAS FOR *LOKI* TO REGAIN HIS POWERS, OR TO RETURN TO ASGARD--YET SO HE *DID!*

AND, WHILE THE *GOD OF EVIL* DOTH ROAM FREELY, *NOTHING* SHALL KEEP ME FROM *REACHING* HIM--

RRR

NOTHING!

THOR--HOLD! LOOK THEE!

AK!

AYE--RETURNED TO WITNESS AN ACT MOST *BLAS-PHEMOUS!*

MINE OWN *SON*--WAVING ABOUT HIS FATHER'S *IMAGE,* AS IF 'TWERE BUT A *PILE OF RUBBLE!*

GREAT *ODIN* HATH RETURNED FROM THE *UNKNOWN MISSION* WHICH TOOK HIM HENCE!

ALL-FATHER... HE DID NOT *MEAN* TO--!

MY *THANKS*, DOURFUL HOGUN-- BUT THOR NEEDS *NONE* TO SPEAK FOR HIM.

LOKI!? THEN MINE *ADOPTED* SON HATH RETURNED, AS WELL, TO FABLED ASGARD--

--AFTER I DID *TAKE* FROM HIM ALL HIS GODLY POWERS, AND HURL HIM DOWNWARD INTO THE *WORLD OF MEN?*

TRULY, THIS BODES *ILL* FOR THE REALM ETERNAL-- WHEN *ODIN'S DICTATES* ARE O'ERTURNED AS IF THEY WERE MERE *CASTLES OF SAND.*

FORGIVE ME, SIRE! IN MINE EAGERNESS TO COLLAR EVIL *LOKI*, I DID *PRESUME* TOO MUCH.

I ONLY PRAY THAT EIGHT-HOOVED *SLEIPNIR* HATH RETURNED ME HERE IN *TIME!*

IS THAT OLD GEEZER FOR *REAL?* HE'S EVEN WEARIN' AN *EYEPATCH*-- AN' I REMEMBER YOU TELLIN' ME, HOBBSIE, THAT HE HAD *TWO* EYES, NOT *ONE* LIKE IN THE *STORYBOOKS!*

AND THAT *HORSE*-- IT'S GOTTA BE A DINO DE LAURENTIIS *REJECT*, OR MY NAME AIN'T--

SHUT UP, RED!

I'M *WARNING* YOU-- DON'T GET ODIN *ANGRY*, OR--!

THOR! I SEE *MORTALS* HERE-- ONE OF THEM THE SAME I *CAST OUT* OF ASGARD, YEARS AGONE!

HOW *DAREST* THOU BRING THEM *BACK*-- AGAINST MY *SACRED DECREE?*

WELL? HAST THOU *NO DEFENSE* FOR THINE ACTION?

THY TRUE SON BE *TOO NOBLE* TO SPEAK FOR HIMSELF, ALL-FATHER.

'TWAS *LOKI* WHO BROUGHT THE MORTAL HERE-- *CONCEALED* MAGICALLY WITHIN YONDER *COMPUTER.*

LOKI! AYE, BALDER... I SHOULD HAVE *KNOWN.*

MINE *APOLOGIES*, THOR, FOR MINE OWN *RASHNESS.*

AS FOR *THEE*, VILLAIN--!

THOU *CANNOT* PUNISH ME ANEW, "*HONORED SIRE*"-- AND I SENSE THAT THOU DOST *KNOW* FULL WELL THE *REASON WHY!*

WOULD THAT I *DID NOT!*

THEN, HE SPOKE THE *TRUTH*-- WHEN HE DID PRATE OF *RAGNAROK?!*

PERHAPS...

...AND PERHAPS *NOT.*

THE *TRUTH*, ALL-FATHER! THOU *KNOWEST* I SPOKE THE TRUTH!

NAY! I *KNOW*, MAYHAP, IN MY WAY-- BUT I DO *NOT ACCEPT!*

LIST, YE GODS, TO MY *TALE*...

"WHILE I SAT, DAYS AGO, IN MY GREAT HALL, MY RAVENS *HUGIN* AND *MUNIN** DID COME TO ME, WITH WORDS AND MUSINGS MOST *DISTURBING*...

WHAT YE *SAY*, FEATHERED ONES, CANNOT-- *MUST NOT* BE!

* NAMES MEANING *THOUGHT* AND *MEMORY*. --R.

"RISING, I STRODE THROUGH THE PALACE ROYAL... YET ALREADY, THE FAST-SPROUTING *SEEDS OF DOUBT* HAD TAKEN FAST ROOT.

"I HIED ME TO THE *FLAMING POOL* WHERE DWELLS ONE WHO *SERVES* ME, YET WHO *LOVES ME NOT*...

"...AYE, EVEN *MIMIR*, THAT FIERY HEAD WHICH DOTH GUARD THE *WELL OF WISDOM*.

WHY DOST THOU *DISTURB* THE COSMIC CONTEMPLATION OF *MIMIR??*

MY *RAVENS* HAVE TOLD ME, MIMIR, OF *EVENTS* WHICH MAY FORETELL THE *COMING OF RAGNAROK*, AT LAST--

--AND I WOULD KNOW *WHAT* I MAY DO, IF *AUGHT*, TO *PREVENT* THAT DAY OF THE GODS' OWN DOOM!

THEN KNOW THOU SHALT-- *BUT ONLY FOR A PRICE!*

NAME IT, AND IT SHALL BE *PAID!*

"THEN, THAT CRACKLING VOICE SPOKE A SHUDDERFUL *PHRASE*...

"AND THEN I KNEW AT LAST THE *FULL DEPTH* OF MIMIR'S DEATHLESS *HATRED*, ALL BECAUSE I GAVE HIM ONCE AS A *HOSTAGE* TO THE RIVAL *VANIR*, IN THE *DAWN OF ASGARD*...

AAARRRRR

"...WHO IN TURN *BEHEADED* HIM, AND SENT HIS VISAGE BACK TO *ME*.

"I *COMPLIED*, AMID PAIN MOST DIRE, WITH MIMIR'S CRUEL *DEMAND*--

"...AND, MY SIGHT *HALVED* NOW, HURLED HIS *VILE TRIBUTE* INTO THE ALL-CONSUMING *FIRE!*

THOU HAST THINE *OUNCE OF FLESH*, DESPISED ONE!

NOW THOU *MUST* TELL ME WHAT I WOULD *KNOW!*

AYE, I HAVE MY REVENGE--THE MORE SO, SINCE WHAT I KNOW BE LITTLE...

*...SAVE THAT THOU MUST GO TO THE **DOMAIN OF HELA**, THERE TO CONSULT WITH THE **SHADE OF VOLLA!***

"I WAXED *ANGRY* AT DECEITFUL MIMIR-- BUT HE IS QUITE *BEYOND* MY POWER TO HARM.

"THUS, ON SLEIPNIR'S BROAD BACK, I *LEFT* ASGARD...

"...AND JOURNEYED TO THE *REALM OF THE DEAD*, ALSO CALLED *HEL*, AFTER THE DEATH-GODDESS HERSELF.

"THROUGH NOW-DARK *VALHALLA* I WANDERED... A PLACE WHERE ONCE THE *VALIANT SLAIN* DID ME HOMAGE...

"...BUT NOW A *PLACE OF THE DEAD*, FULL AS MUCH AS *HEL* ITSELF.

"I MADE A SILENT VOW TO *ALTER* THAT SITUATION...

"...*IF* I, AND ALL THE GODS, *SURVIVED!*

"AT LENGTH, I REACHED *HELA'S TRUE DOMAIN*, WHERE THE WITCH-WOMAN *VOLLA* HAD GONE, UPON DYING SOON AFTER SHE HAD SPOUTED HER *PROPHECIES OF DOOM*...*

VOLLA! COME FORWARD, PROPHETESS!

ODIN COMMANDS THEE!

*ISSUE #200. --ROY.

WHY, ALL-FATHER, DOST THOU INTERRUPT MY DREAMLESS SLEEP?

I SUSPECT THOU KNOWEST.

I WOULD LEARN HOW TO DELAY FOR AN EON, AN ETERNITY, OR THE MEREST MOMENT--

--THE COMING OF RAGNAROK!

WHAT IRONY SUPREME-- WHEN 'TWAS THOU WHO DID ORDAIN ASGARD'S FALL, ONE DAY--

--BECAUSE THE WORLD HATH NEED OF "FIERY CLEANSING," THOU DIDST SAY.

KNOW YE THAT NOT EVEN MIGHTY ODIN MAY O'ERTURN WHAT ODIN HATH DECREED!

AND, THOUGH LOKI SHALL PLAY HIS PART, IT SHALL BE THE DEATH OF THIS ONE WHICH SHALL SIGNAL THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS!

BALDER!?

BUT, HE BE IMMUNE TO --

ENOUGH! I CAN SAY NO MORE!

WAIT! DO NOT FADE, SPIRIT! I--

SO! IT IS FROM THY VISAGE THE PROPHETESS' GHOST DOTH SHRINK IN TERROR!

AS ALL IN THIS REALM SHRINK FROM HELA, GODDESS OF DEATH!

NOR SHALL ODIN DISPUTE THY RULE-- HERE!

BUT, OF LATE, THOU HAST DARED USURP RULE OF VALHALLA, AS WELL--

--TURNING MY HALL OF VALIANT WARRIORS INTO A BARREN PLACE OF GRIEVING SHADOWS!

THOU HAST OTHER MATTERS THAT NEED CONCERN THEE MORE.

I HEARD VOLLA'S WRAITH SAY THAT RAGNAROK WOULD COME--WHEN BALDER ENTERED MY DARK REALM.

I SHALL MAKE READY, THEN--

--TO GREET HIM, WITH TRUMPETS MADE OF SKULLS!

THEN WILL *HELA'S* DAY SURELY COME--

--AND THE *OLD GODS* BE SWEPT AWAY, LIKE *CHAFF* BEFORE THE *KILLING WIND!*

"NOR DID I *RESPOND* TO HER WILD-EYED RAVINGS...

"FOR, I KNEW SHE SPOKE THE *TRUTH.*

"MY HEART WAS *HEAVY* AS I RODE FROM HEL... YET, I WAS STILL *FAR* FROM OUR OWN GATES, WHEN--

HALT, SLEIPNIR!

THOU-- SKULKER IN SHADOWS! COME FORTH, OR INCUR THE *WRATH OF ODIN!*

PARDONS WITHOUT *NUMBER*, ALL-FATHER! I HEARD THY STEED'S *HOOVES*, BUT KNEW NOT *WHO*--

'TIS *HODER*-- THE *BLIND* GOD WHO HATH LONG ROAMED *FAR* FROM THE REALM!

WHAT DOST THOU *HERE*, SIGHTLESS ONE?

--THERE TO TAKE MY PLACE AMONG THE *GODS!*

AND SO THOU *SHALT*, FOR SUCH BE THY *RIGHT*, AS AN *ASGARDIAN BORN.*

TAKE MINE *HAND*, AND MOUNT BEHIND ME!

"AND SO, WITH HODER, I CAME AGAIN *HITHER...*"

I WOULD *RETURN* TO ASGARD, AFTER MY *WANDERINGS*--

--TO FIND *MORTALS* MILLING ABOUT, AND *LOKI* RESTORED TO UNDESERVED *GOD-HOOD!*

WELL, BALDER? HOW DOST *THOU* FEEL ABOUT THE *PROPHECY OF VOLLA?*

SHE BE A *PALE GHOST*, SIRE-- HER *WORDS* AS WEAK AS HER *SUBSTANCE.*

I FEAR *NOT!* I *BELIEVE* NOT!

NOR DID I *EXPECT* THEE TO-- FOR, THOU ART TRULY CALLED-- *BALDER THE BRAVE!*

BUT *THOR* DOTH BELIEVE THE PROPHECY, FATHER--

IF 'TIS TRULY *LOKI* WHO BE DESTINED TO *HERALD* ASGARD'S FALL--

--THEN LET ME *SLAY* HIM WITH ENCHANTED *MJOLNIR*, AND MAY-HAP *STAVE OFF* THE DAY OF RECKONING!

SEEK NOT TO BLAME *ME*, THUNDER GOD--

--FOR WHAT THE *FATES* HAVE WRIT LARGE!

AND SEEK NOT *THOU*, VILE ONE, TO BE HELD *BLAME-LESS*, FOR THAT WHICH THOU WILT MOST *GLADLY* DO!

SIRE, I--

SILENCE! I *ACCEPT* WHAT MUST BE.

SEEK NOT *FORGIVENESS*, ALSO, FOR THINE APPROACHING *ACT OF TREACHERY!*

JUST THEN, FROM THE GLEAMING RAINBOW BRIDGE--

--THE *GJALLAR-HORN* OF HEIMDALL IS SOUNDED, LONG AND LOUDLY!

WHAT? DO THE *FORCES OF EVIL* ATTACK ALREADY?

THOU ART TOO *SKITTISH*, THOR.

AYE! 'TIS NO *UNWELCOME GUESTS* WHO COME *THIS* TIME--

--BUT THE *GODDESSES OF ASGARD*, GONE FAR TOO *LONG* FROM THIS FABLED REALM--

--LED BACK BY THINE OWN BELOVED *SIF*, WHO FETCHED THEM HITHER BY *MY COMMAND!*

HAIL, ALL-FATHER!

THOU HAST *SPOKEN*-- AND SIF HATH *OBEYED!*

AS HAVE WE *ALL*, GREAT ODIN...

...INCLUDING THY LOVING *WIFE*, WHO HATH EVER LONGED TO STAND AT THY *SIDE*.

HAIL, FRIGGA-- HEART OF MINE OWN HEART!

BUT, 'TIS NOT MEET THAT WE SHOULD SPEAK *HERE*.

LET US TO THE *PALACE*.

A *MOMENT*, LORD AND MASTER...

FIRST, I WOULD GREET THIS *SPECIAL ONE*, WHO HATH NE'ER BEEN FAR FROM MY THOUGHTS.

HOW FARES THE *HEIR-APPARENT* TO THE REALM ETERNAL?

WELL ENOW, MILADY... BUT THERE ARE SO MANY *QUESTIONS*...!

HEY, *HOBBSIE*-- IS THAT *FRIGGA* DAME THOR'S *MOTHER*, THEN?

I... *DOUBT* IT.

AND THEY SHALL BE *ANSWERED*, FOR ALL OF US... IN *ODIN'S OWN TIME!*

IN *NORSE MYTH*, ANYWAY, HIS MOTHER WAS A *GIANTESS* NAMED *JORD*...

...BUT I DON'T SEE *ANYBODY* IN THIS CROWD WHO ANSWERS TO *THAT* DESCRIPTION, SO--

ARE YOU *LISTENING* TO ME, RED?

YET, LIKE MANY A MORTAL AND IMMORTAL BEFORE HIM, THE BEARDED CAMERAMAN HAS BEEN SUDDENLY STRUCK ***SPEECHLESS***...

...BY CLOSER SIGHT OF THE ARMORED BEAUTY CALLED ***SIF****, THE PERFECT MARRIAGE OF QUIET* ***STRENGTH*** *AND REGAL* ***LOVELINESS***...

...AS SHE GREETS THE ***ONE SHE LOVES.***

WHAT ***WORDS*** *ARE EXCHANGED BETWEEN THEM, AFTER THEIR DAYS APART, THE MAN* ***CANNOT HEAR***...

BUT, IN THAT MOMENT, ***ROGER "RED" NORVELL*** *KNOWS THAT NO* ***OTHER*** *WOMAN CAN EVER MEAN* ***ANYTHING*** *TO HIM--*

--WHILE THE BURNING MEMORY OF THE LADY ***SIF*** *THROBS WILDLY IN HIS BRAIN.*

NOBLE THOR! FRIGGA HATH REQUESTED THY PRESENCE WHILST WE CONVERSE WITHIN.

LIKEWISE, I WOULD HAVE A FURTHER WORD WITH YOU CONCERNING YONDER MORTALS.

THOU MUST GO, MY LOVE.

ONLY TO RETURN, ERE LONG.

I WOULD LEARN WHY MY FATHER SENT THEE TO FETCH THE GODDESSES OF ASGARD, AFTER ALL THIS TIME.

AND, WHEN HE LEARNS THE TRUTH, MYTHOPHILE, SO WILL YOU...

BUT, MEANWHILE...

HAIL, BALDER! THOU DOST SEEM IN FINE SPIRITS.

IT JOYS ME TO SEE ALL ASGARD UNITED AGAIN.

STILL, LIKE THOR, I WONDER AT THE PURPOSE OF THINE ODIN-SENT MISSION.

ALAS, HE DID NOT ENLIGHTEN ME, BUT MERELY--

'SCUZE ME, TALL-DARK-AND-GORGEOUS, BUT I COULDN'T HELP OVERHEARING WHAT YOU WERE YAKKIN' ABOUT, AND--

THEN THOU WILT HONOR US, MORTAL, BY STANDING FARTHER OFF.

UH... YEAH, OKAY...

SHEESH! TALK ABOUT A COLD SHOULDER!

FOR MY TASTE, YOU CAN LEAVE THIS WHOLE GANG O' GODS TO BARBARA WALTERS!

WE CAN'T JUDGE THEM BY OUR STANDARDS, RED.

I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY THEY DON'T TOSS US OUT OF HERE.

WHICH THEY MAY AT ANY MOMENT.

SO GET BUSY SHOOTING FILM OF ANYTHING THAT MOVES--

--WHILE I TRY TO FIGURE OUT A TV SPIEL THAT'LL MAKE SENSE OF THIS PLACE TO SOME NICE BIG NIELSEN NUMBERS.

I MEAN, MOST PEOPLE CAN'T EVEN KEEP THE NAMES OF ALL THE OSMONDS STRAIGHT, LET ALONE--

HUH!?

TAKE NOT VOLLA'S PROPHECY LIGHTLY, FRIEND BALDER.

FIE! HOGUN BE EVEN GRIMMER THAN USUAL, OF LATE.

I'VE NO REASON TO FEAR EITHER MAN, OR IMMORTAL...OR ANY THING IN ALL THE REALM.

ALL YE KNOW THE STORY, NIGH AS WELL AS I MYSELF...

"...HOW LOVING *FRIGGA* EXTRACTED A *SACRED VOW* NEVER TO *HARM* ME FROM *EVERY LIVING THING*...

"...AYE, EVEN FROM *UNLIVING* THINGS, SUCH AS *WOOD* AND *STONE!*

"THIS VOW BE *NOT* IN FORCE WHEN I WANDER TO *MIDGARD* BELOW..."

YET, HERE IN *ASGARD*-- I AM *INVULNERABLE* TO WARRIOR OR WEAPON!

AYE! IT HATH BEEN *SO LONG* SINCE WE PUT THAT VOW TO THE *TEST*, BALDER, I'D NEAR *FORGOT* IT!

THEN *REMIND* YOURSELVES, MY FRIENDS...

...BY SENDING YOUR *SPEARS* AND *ARROWS* AT ME-- AND BEHOLDING THEM *VEER AWAY* FROM MINE ENCHANTED FORM!

IT'S *YOU* WHO'S CRAZY, BALDER-- IF YOU *GO THRU* WITH WHAT YOU JUST *SAID!*

I SAID *NAUGHT.*

DON'T YOU *SEE*? IT'S *LOKI* WHO PLANTED THAT THOUGHT IN YOUR MIND, FOR HIS *OWN*--

FOR ONCE, HE SPEAKS *TRUTH.*

IN GOD'S NAME-- *NO!!*

EH? HATH THE FOREMOST OF THE THREE MORTALS GONE *MAD?*

I *THANK* THEE, HOWEVER, MORTAL, FOR THY NEEDLESS *CONCERN.*

DOOMED! THE WHOLE PLACE-- MAYBE THE WHOLE *UNIVERSE*-- IS *DOOMED!*

WHAT'RE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT, MR. H.?

THEY-- WON'T *BELIEVE* ME! IT'S LIKE *ODIN* SAID:

ALL THIS IS "*WRITTEN*" SOMEWHERE...

...AND THE GODS ARE JUST ACTING OUT A *SCENARIO* THAT WAS WRITTEN AN *ETERNITY* AGO. THEY--

WAIT A MINUTE! MAYBE *ODIN* WOULDN'T LISTEN TO ME, DESPITE ALL HE *KNOWS*--

BUT *THOR'S* GOT A MORE *HUMAN* SIDE TO HIM.

HE'LL LISTEN TO ME! *HE'S* **GOT** TO!

...THUS, MY BELOVED WIFE, IT BE MY WISH THAT ALL ASGARDIANS, MALE AND FEMALE, STAND TOGETHER TO FACE THE IMMINENT PERIL OF--

THOR! THOR, I-- I GOTTA TALK TO YOU--!

BY THE BLOOD OF YMIR, THAT BIRTHED THE WORLD! THESE MORTALS WHOM LOKI HATH FOISTED UPON US DO TRY MY PATIENCE, THOR.

I'VE A MIND TO HAVE THEE HURL THINE HAMMER AT THIS RASH ONE WHO DARES DISTURB THE PRESENCE!

HE KNOWS NOT OUR WAYS, SIRE. BE GENTLE, I PRAY THEE.

MY THANKS, MILADY. I SHALL DEAL WITH HIM.

BEGONE, HARRIS HOBBS, WHILST STILL THOU--

LISTEN TO ME, THOR!

THE OTHER GODS-- THEY'RE OUTSIDE THROWING SPEARS AND THINGS-- AT BALDER!

WHAT?

THIS CAN ONLY BE LOKI'S DOING-- TO HASTEN THE COMING OF RAGNAROK!

VERILY, SINCE AGES UNTOLD, THE PALACE OF ODIN HATH E'ER STOOD INVIOLATE TO THE HAND OF GODS AND GIANTS ALIKE...

BUT, THIS DAY, LET ITS WALLS BE SHATTERED ASUNDER--

THA-BOOM!

--THAT THOR MAY SAVE THE LIFE OF HIS DEAREST FRIEND, AND OF ASGARD ITSELF--

--IF IT BE NOT ALREADY TOO LATE!!

WHAT OF *THEE*, MINE HUSBAND?

THOU DOST *KNOW*, PERHAPS, THAT BALDER AND ASGARD BE *DOOMED*, DESPITE ALL I COULD DO.

COULDST *THOU* HAVE DONE... *NOTHING*?

BUT, SAD-EYED AND GRIM-VISAGED, ODIN MERELY STARES AT THE *COSMOS* UNFOLDING BEFORE HIS *ALL-SEEING EYE*...

...AND KEEPS HIS *SILENCE*.

AND, WHILE THIS HAS TRANSPIRED--

DO YE *SEE*, ASGARDIANS?

THE HAND OF THE *NORN-FATES* TURNS ASIDE THE SPEAR-- THE ARROW-- THE BLADE.

BE THERE *ANY OTHER* WHO WOULD HONE HIS WEAPON-SKILL WITH *BALDER* AS HIS TARGET?

LET *ME* TRY MINE HAND, BOASTFUL ONE!

'TIS *NJORD*--HE WHO WAS KING OF THE *VANIR-GODS*--

--ERE ODIN DEFEATED AND *ANNEXED* THEIR REALM TO *ASGARD*!

HE SEEMS *JOVIAL* ENOW-- YET HE BEARS NO LOVE FOR *ANY* OF ODIN'S RACE!

HERE, BALDER! A PRESENT FROM *NJORD*-- LORD OF THE *VANIR*!

NO MYSTIC HAND SHALL DEFLECT *MY* SPEAR, TRULY AIMED!

THOU SPEAKEST *A'RIGHT*, NJORD AND, WHEN *THAT* BE SO--

THRAKK!

--THEN THE HURLED SPEAR MUST *SPLINTER ITSELF*, THUS HONORING ITS AGE-OLD *VOW TO FRIGGA*!

HAH! BALDER MAKES FINE SPORT WITH US!

THEN LET US ENJOY THIS GAME OF GAMES!

AYE! THE PRACTICE WILL SERVE US IN GOOD STEAD--

--IF E'ER THE GIANTS AND TROLLS RISE AGAINST US, AS VOLLA FORETOLD.

DO YOUR WORST, ASGARDIANS!

THUS DOTH BALDER THE BRAVE DEFY BOTH THE MOUTHINGS OF DEAD WITCHES--

--AND THE EVIL INTENT OF LOKI!

MORE WEAPONS! MORE!!

HEY, WOW! THOSE GUYS ARE REALLY GETTING INTO THE SPIRIT OF THE THING!

JOEY--TRY TO PICK UP SOME OF THEIR SHOUTS!

I'LL GET IN CLOSER.

BUT-- WHAT'S HAPPENING OVER THERE--?

ALAS! I HAVE RETURNED TO AN ASGARD REJOICING-- YET CAN TAKE NO PART IN ITS MIRTH.

AH, BUT THOU CANST, FRIEND HODER.

KNOWING THOU WERT ONCE AN ARCHER, I HAVE FASHIONED A SPECIAL BOW FOR THEE.

ARCHER!? AYE-- THE FINEST THAT ASGARD E'ER SAW, BEFORE MY BLINDNESS.

HAIL, HODER! LET THE SOUND OF MY VOICE GUIDE THEE!

MY THANKS, VALIANT ONE.

NOT FOR THE GIFT OF SIGHT ITSELF WOULD I SEEK TO HARM THEE--

--BUT, SINCE IT IS BUT A *GAME* WE GODLINGS PLAY--!

STOP!

THPP!

:UHN--!:

BALDER!

HAVE I ACTED-- TOO LATE??

BALDER-- IS DEAD!

NOW TRULY ASGARD-- AND ALL THE EARTH MUST FACE THE DAY OF DOOM!

WE-- WE DID NOT *DREAM*, THUNDER GOD--!

'TWAS BUT A PRANK-- A *JEST*--!

WHILE, BEHIND THEM, THE **CAMERAS** KEEP GRINDING AWAY... TILL THEY RUN OUT OF **FILM**.

NEXT ISSUE: **THE AWESOME AFTERMATH!**

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THE MIGHTY

THOR®

AND, LIVE OR DIE -- IT'S ALL BEING FILMED FOR TV!

WHILE BALDER LIES DYING, AND A UNIVERSE TREMBLES--

THOR BATTLES LOKI! IN THE LAND OF TROLLS!!

When DR. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking-stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic hammer MJOLNIR— and the lame physician is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm, Lord of the Living Lightning— and heir to the throne of eternal Asgard....

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!™

A BALANCE IS STRUCK!

ALL IN ALL, IT'S HARDLY BEEN A **HAPPY HOMECOMING** FOR THE THUNDER GOD, AS HE RETURNS TO FABLED **ASGARD**-- AND, ALMOST WITHIN A MATTER OF **MINUTES**--

BALDER-- IS DEAD!

NOW TRULY **ASGARD**-- AND ALL THE **EARTH**-- MUST FACE THE **DAY OF DOOM!**

THE DAY CALLED-- **RAGNAROK!**

AS FOR THE **OTHER** ASGARDIANS WHO MILL ABOUT, SHOCKED-- **WORDS FAIL THEM**--

FOR, WHAT BEGAN AS A **MOMENT OF SPORT** HAS ENDED IN A **TRAGEDY WITHOUT EQUAL**--!

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NOW, AS THOR LAYS HIS UNBREATHING FRIEND UPON A GLEAMING BIER, THE **EVENTS** OF A SOMEHOW **UNREAL** PAST UNFOLD BEFORE HIS **INNER EYE:** *

BALDER'S PLAYFUL BOAST OF **INVULNERABILITY** WHILE IN ASGARD, BECAUSE OF A **VOW** MADE BY VIRTUALLY **ALL LIVING THINGS** NEVER TO HARM HIM...

THE SIGHT OF BALDER **LAUGHING**, AS THE SPORTIVE GODS HURLED **INEFFECTUAL WEAPONS** AT HIS UNTOUCHED BODY...

*EVEN AS THEY UNFOLDED BEFORE YOUR **OUTER** ONES **LAST ISSUE**. --ROY.

THEN, SUDDENLY, THE **ARROW** FIRED BY THE BLIND GOD **HODER**, WHICH SOMEHOW PIERCED AND STILLED BALDER'S BRAVE HEART... BEFORE EVEN **THOR** COULD INTERVENE!

NOW, **THOR** BOWS A HUMBLE KNEE, AS DO **HOGUN, FANDRAL**, AND THE USUALLY BOISTEROUS **VOLSTAGG**.

AND, IF **GODS** CAN PRAY... **THEY** PRAY.

BUT NOT FOR LONG IN **SILENCE!**

FOOLS! WEEP FOR **YOURSELVES**, IF WEEP YOU MUST!

FOR, YE KNOW **WELL** WHAT HATH BEEN **FORETOLD** TO ALL-FATHER **ODIN:**

THAT THE **DEATH OF BALDER** SHALL BE THE SIGNAL FOR THE IMMINENT **END OF ASGARD**-- AND OF **ALL THAT IS!**

LOKI--THOU STRUTTING **GOD OF EVIL!** WILT THOU MOCK E'EN THY **FALLEN COMRADE?**

IN SOOTH, I DO SENSE **THY** TALONED HAND IN BALDER'S FATE--AND FOR **THAT**, THOU SHALT SURELY **PAY!**

AYE, FREELY DO I **ADMIT** IT!

'TWAS **I** WHO GAVE BLIND HODER AN **ARROW** MADE OF **MISTLETOE**--

--THE **ONE** THING, LIVING OR UNLIVING, WHICH DID **NOT** SWEAR NEVER TO HARM BALDER!

AND NOW, THOU **KNOWEST** FULL WELL WHAT SHALL **FOLLOW:**

"THE DREADED *MIDGARD SERPENT* SHALL REAR UP FROM THE COILS ABOUT THE EARTH, TO *ENGULF* AND *O'ERWHELM* ANY WHO STAND IN HIS SCALY PATH...

"ICE-HEARTED *HELA*, QUEEN OF DEATH-- AND WHOM SOME HAVE CALLED MY *DAUGHTER*-- SHALL STRIDE THROUGH ASGARD, SEEKING *GODLY SOULS* FOR HER DARK DOMAIN...

"AND AT HER SIDE, *UNCHAINED* AT LAST, SHALL BE THE GREAT WOLF *FENRIS*.

"AYE, AND THE *TROLLS*-- BOTH THOSE WHOM MORTALS CALL *GIANTS*, AND THOSE WHO BE MONSTROUSLY *DWARFISH*--

"THEY SHALL *TRAMPLE* THE RAINBOW BRIDGE 'NEATH THEIR FEET, AS THEY E'ER HAVE *LUSTED* TO DO.

"AND YE *GODS* SHALL RISE TO THE *DEFENSE*, SHOUTING NOBLE *SLOGANS* AND WIELDING WEAPONS ONCE BELIEVED *INVINCIBLE!*

"THUS SHALL ASGARD *PERISH* AT LAST, IN ALL-CONSUMING *FLAMES* STOKED BY THE FIRE-DEMON *SURTUR*--

--AND *NOT ONE* OF YE I SEE BEFORE ME SHALL *SURVIVE* THAT HOLOCAUST TO BUILD A *NEW* WORLD ON THE SMOULDERING RUINS OF THE *OLD!*

MOST *FIENDISH* OF MEN OR IMMORTALS!

DOST *THOU* THINK TO LIVE-- WHEN THE *REALM ETERNAL* ITSELF BURNS AND CRUMBLES?

OFT HAVE I SAID IT: IF *LOKI* DOTH NOT *RULE* ASGARD--

--THEN HE WOULD RATHER SEE IT *FALL FOREVER!*

THOU SHALT *NOT* LIVE TO SEE IT FALL-- NOT IF *HOGUN'S MACE* CAN--

HALT, FRIENDS!

THOR!? DOST THOU *DEFEND* LOKI-- WHOM, A MOMENT PAST, THOU DIDST MEAN TO *SMITE?*

HE DOTH *REALIZE* NOW, DOLTS, THAT YE BE BUT *WASTING* PRECIOUS TIME AND STRENGTH--

--TIME THAT YE SHALL *NEED*, AND NEED DEARLY, WHEN THE *TROLLS* DO STRIKE!

LOKI, THIS I DO *SWEAR*: THE HAND THAT *LAYS YOU LOW*, ON THAT LAST DAY, SHALL BELONG TO *NONE SAVE THOR!*

HALT, YE GODS!

ALL-FATHER! WE DID NOT *SEE*--

LOKI SPOKE THE *TRUTH!*

WE NEED *TIME* TO PREPARE FOR THE *GATHERING HORDES* OF DISCORD AND CHAOS--

--TIME WHICH CAN ONLY BE HOURS *IF BALDER LIVES!*

IF HE *LIVES*, SIRE? WOULD THAT HE *DID!*

BUT, I *SAW* HIM DIE-- FELT HIS *HEART*, AS STILL AS ANY *MORTAL GRAVE!*

AYE, HE DWELLS NOW IN *HELA'S DEATH-REALM*, TRUE ENOW.

YET, THERE STILL BE *HOPE.*

I KNOW THAT *ANY* OF YE WOULD JOURNEY TO *HEL* ITSELF, IF I DID ASK THEE TO...

YET, 'TIS WRITTEN THAT *HERMOD THE SWIFT* SHALL BE THE ONE TO GO!

HERMOD--FLEET OF FOOT, AND SKILLED RIDER-- WILL *YE* HASTEN TO HELA'S KINGDOM, AND SEE WHAT *MAY BE DONE?*

THOU *KNOWEST*, SIRE.

FOR THIS TASK HAVE I E'ER HELD MYSELF IN *READINESS* AND *TRAINING*, SINCE TIME OUT OF MIND!

GO, THEN-- ON THE BACK OF EIGHT-HOOVED *SLEIPNIR*, AND LEARN WHAT MUST BE DONE TO *RESTORE BALDER* TO US IN TIME!

I SHALL RETURN WITH *GOOD TIDINGS*, ALL-FATHER ODIN--

--OR THOU SHALT SEE ME *NEVERMORE!*

CAN YOU GET A *CLEAR SHOT* OF THAT GUY ON THE *HORSE*, RED?

YOU *KNOW* IT, MR. H.!

NOW, YE GODS AND GODDESSES... LET US *GIRD* OURSELVES FOR THE *BATTLE* WHICH STILL MAY COME!

FOR, ONLY THE *FOOL* LIGHTS CANDLES TO *PEACE*...

...AND FAILS TO *SHARPEN HIS SWORD!*

AND, AS THE GODS DIS-PEL, EACH TO HIS APPOINTED TASKS--

--THE **MORTALS** AMONG THEM ARE LEFT TO PONDER THE **FATE OF GODS.**

I DON'T **GET** IT, MR. H.! ODIN AND COMPANY ACT ALMOST LIKE THEY **KNOW** WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN-- AS IF THEY'RE JUST **ACTING OUT PARTS** WRITTEN FOR THEM.

MAYBE, IN A SENSE, THAT'S JUST WHAT THEY **ARE** DOING, JOEY.

IF SO, THEN BEFORE LONG, **HERMOD** WILL RETURN FROM HIS **TRIP TO HELL**, OR WHATEVER THEY CALL IT HERE...

"...TO GIVE ODIN A **MESSAGE FROM HELA:**

"IF **ALL THE WORLD** WILL ONLY **WEEP FOR BALDER**, HE CAN BE RESTORED TO ASGARD -- AND RAGNAROK **WON'T** HAPPEN ON SCHEDULE.

"THEN, AS IT WAS PREDICTED CENTURIES AGO, ALL THINGS **WILL** WEEP...ONE WAY OR ANOTHER...

"...THOUGH I DON'T KNOW IF **'ALL THE WORLD'** IN THIS CASE INCLUDES JUST **ASGARD**, OR **EARTH** AS WELL...

"...ALL THINGS, THAT IS, EXCEPT A SINGLE **GIANTESS**... I THINK HER NAME'S **THOKK**... SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

"SHE'LL **REFUSE**... ASKING WHAT IN BLAZES **BALDER** EVER DID FOR **HER.**

"ACCORDING TO **SOME** SOURCES, THOKK IS **LOKI** HIMSELF, IN DISGUISE...

...BUT, IN THE WORLD OF **GODS**, WHO CAN TRULY **SAY**?

ALL **I** CARE ABOUT IS HAVING AN **UPPER WEST SIDE** TO GO BACK TO WHEN THIS LUNACY IS **OVER.**

YOU'RE ASKING **ME**!?

IF **RAGNAROK** COMES, WILL IT DESTROY **EARTH**, TOO-- OR **NOT**?

I'M NOT EVEN SURE WE'RE REALLY **HERE.**

GREAT! IT'S JUST **DANDY** TO BE SHOOTING THE **GREATEST TV SPEC** OF ALL TIME-- AND NOT BE SURE THERE'LL BE A **NETWORK** TO PUT IT ON!

AS FAR AS **WE'RE** CONCERNED, RED, THERE STILL **IS.**

AND WE'RE GOING TO **CONTINUE** UNDER THAT ASSUMPTION.

YOU TWO BRING YOUR **EQUIPMENT** OVER HERE; IT'S TIME I DID A **REMOTE.**

WE'LL START WITH THE CAMERA ON *BALDER*, ALL LAID OUT IN HIS BIER-- THEN CLOSE WITH THE CAMERA ON *ME*, OKAY?

YOU'RE THE *BOSS*.

RIGHT. START ROLLING

IN A STARTLING *TRAGEDY* HERE, EARLIER TODAY, *BALDER*-- THE ASGARDIAN WHO CONFORMS MOST CLOSELY TO THE ANCIENT *NORSE GOD OF LIGHT*-- WAS CUT DOWN BY AN ALLEGEDLY *ENCHANTED ARROW* FROM THE BOW OF A *BLIND GOD*.

IT *SOUNDS* LIKE THE STUFF *STORYBOOKS* ARE MADE OF... BUT, HERE BEYOND THE FABLED *RAINBOW BRIDGE*, BALDER'S DEATH IS ALL TOO FRIGHTENINGLY *REAL*.

WHAT'S *MORE*: THE ASGARDIANS HAVE *MYTHS OF THEIR OWN*-- MYTHS WHICH MAINTAIN THAT THEY *CREATED* OUR EARTH--

--AND THAT WHEN *THEY* GO, *WE* GO, AS WELL!

THUS, BALDER'S DEATH IS A TRAGEDY FOR *ASGARD*, CERTAINLY.

BUT-- A TRAGEDY FOR THE *EARTH*, AS WELL?

ONLY *TIME* WILL TELL.

THIS IS *HARRIS HOBBS... ASGARD*.

OKAY, THAT'S A *WRAP*.

YOUR *PARDON*, MORTAL-- BUT, THOUGH I HAVE OFT BEEN TO EARTH, I AM STILL A *STRANGER* TO ITS WAYS.

THINE *EMPLOYER* DOTH BEHAVE AS THOUGH HE KNOWS THE *FUTURE*, AND WHAT IT HOLDS IN STORE.

YEAH, WELL... HE LIKES TO *THINK* HE DOES, ANYWAY, LADY SIF.

ME, I JUST POINT THE *CAMERA*, Y'KNOW?

I SEE. YET, ALL THIS TALK OF *DOOM*--

LOOK, ALL *I* KNOW IS A *GOOD-LOOKING LADY* WHEN I SEE ONE.

AND *YOU* SURE BEAT ANYTHING I'VE SEEN LATELY IN ANY *SINGLES BAR!*

WHY DON'T YOU DITCH *GOLDILOCKS*, AND WE CAN--

AWAY, MORTAL! DOST THOU PRESUME TO LAY HANDS UPON THE *CHOSEN OF THOR?*

HEY!!

BE *GLAD*, RATHER, THAT I DO NOT SMITE THEE WITH MINE OWN *SWORD!*

ALRIGHT, THAT DOES IT--*I'VE HAD IT!*

YOU'RE SO HOT ON *THOR*-- HE'S *ALL YOURS!*

WHAT CHANCE'VE *I* GOT AGAINST A GUY WHO'S GOT A *MAGIC HAMMER*-- AND THE *POWER OF A GOD?*

'TIS NOT ALONE FOR HIS *STRENGTH* THAT I DO LOVE HIM. HE--

YEAH, *SURE!* HE'S *MORE* THAN JUST THE *ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER* OF THE NORSE-GOD SET, HUH?

YOU DIG HIM 'CAUSE HIS *HEART IS PURE*, RIGHT?

NUTS! I NEED SOME *AIR!*

THOU DOST SWALLOW THY PASSION TOO *EASILY*, MORTAL.

HUH? OH-- *LOKI!* I'M SURPRISED YOU HAVEN'T *SPLIT* BY NOW.

YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY *MR. POPULAR* AROUND HERE.

MAYHAP *NOT*-- BUT *THOU* MIGHT WELL BE, IF--

WADDA YOU *MEAN*? DON'T TRY ONE OF YOUR CONS ON *ME!*

THOU *CANST* HAVE SUCH POWER AS *THOR* DOTH POSSESS-- *IF* THOU WILT LISTEN TO *LOKI.*

FOR THE SAKE OF BEAUTEOUS *SIF*, WILT THOU PLACE THYSELF IN *MY HANDS?*

SURE-- *WHY NOT?* I'VE BEEN WAITIN' *ALL MY LIFE* FOR SOMETHING LIKE HER--

AND, THUNDER GOD OR *NO* THUNDER GOD, RED NORVELL DOESN'T GIVE UP *EASY!*

WHAT'VE YOU GOT IN *MIND?*

FIRST, RETRIEVE THY *CAMERA!*

AND NOW-- WE MUST BE GONE!

GONE? BUT-- WHERE TO??

THOU SHALT SEE SOON ENOW, MORTAL. AYE, TRULY--

-- THOU SHALT SEE!

KWOOF!

ALL-FATHER! A WORD WITH THEE, I PRAY!

SPEAK THY PIECE, MILADY SIF-- WHILST MINE ARMORERS GIRD ME FOR THE FINAL BATTLE!

LOKI HATH VANISHED-- TAKING WITH HIM THE MORTAL CAMERA-MAN!

I THINK IT BODES NO GOOD TO THE REALM.

LOKI HATH NE'ER MEANT GOOD FORTUNE TO ASGARD, I FEAR.

OFTTIMES, I THINK 'TWOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER TO LOSE BOTH MINE EYES THAN TO HAVE ADOPTED THE PRINCE OF EVIL AS MINE OWN SECOND SON. *

*AS SEEN IN JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY #112. -- ROY.

YET, WHAT IS DONE... IS DONE.

COME, MILADY! BETWEEN MY FAITHFUL WOLVES LET US GO--

--TO MEET OUR ENDS, LIKE GODS TRUE-BORN!

YE FAITHFUL OF ASGARD-- HEAR NOW THE WORDS OF ODIN!

'TIS WAR WE FACE-- WAR WITH THE GATHERED FORCES OF DARKNESS--

'TIS WITH A HEAVY HEART, YET A PROUD ONE, THAT I DO LEAD THE CREAM OF THE REALM FORTH TO THE COMING STRUGGLE.

--AND GLAD I AM THAT TYR, GOD OF WAR, BE WITH US!

I WOULD SMITE THE FENRIS-WOLF, SIRE--

--THAT FERAL DEMON WHICH ONCE DID DEVOUR MY HAND!

LORD ODIN! LET ME SPEAK, IF IT PLEASE THEE!

HODER! WHAT HAST THOU TO SAY, BLIND ONE?

ALL HERE KNOW THAT 'TWAS MINE ARROW WHICH, AGAINST MY WILL, DID FELL POOR BALDER...

SLAY ME, I PRAY, WITH MINE OWN BOW-- THAT MY SIN MAY BE THAT LITTLE ATONED!

RISE, VALIANT HODER!

THOU HAST BUT PLAYED THY PART, AS DO WE ALL.

IF MEN ARE PAWNS OF THE GODS-- WHY, THEN, THE GODS THEMSELVES MAY BE BUT PUPPETS OF SOME HIGHER, UNKNOWN POWER.

THOU ART GUILTLESS! I'LL NOT SLAY THEE!

THEN LET MINE ARROWS STRIKE FOR ASGARD THIS DAY!

IF ONLY THERE WAS ONE WHO COULD GUIDE MY YET-SKILLED HAND--!

I SHALL!

I WILL STAND BESIDE THEE, HODER, AND POINT OUT TARGETS FOR THY RIGHTEOUS VENOM.

I--I SEEM TO KNOW THAT VOICE! YET, IT CANNOT BE SHE--!

'TIS INDEED SHE WHOM THOU DIDST LEAST EXPECT, GODLING...

...AYE, EVEN *SIGYN*--SHE WHO BE *WIFE* TO LOKI!

HUH? MR. H.--IS THIS FOR *REAL?*

THAT'S THE MYTHICAL NAME OF *LOKI'S WIFE,* ALL RIGHT--BUT I DIDN'T KNOW SHE ACTUALLY *EXISTED.*

I GUESS SHE CAME BACK WITH *SIF* AND THE OTHER *GODDESSES,** BUT I STILL DON'T--

*LAST ISSUE. --R.

LET *NONE* IN ASGARD DOUBT *SIGYN'S LOVE* FOR HER HUSBAND, THE *GOD OF EVIL!*

SIGYN IS A *TRUE WIFE,* NOW AND ALWAYS--YET, I *WILL* GUIDE THE SURE HAND OF *HODER*--

--EVEN IF THAT BOW-HAND BE TURNED TOWARD *LOKI* HIMSELF!

SO BE IT!

BUT NOW, THERE BE *NAUGHT* TO DO BUT *WAIT* FOR THE ONSLAUGHT OF THE *HORDES OF HEL.*

HOLD! WHERE BE *THOR,* AMID THIS VALIANT THRONG?

WHERE BE ODIN'S ONLY *BLOOD-SON,* AMONG YE GODS WHO BE *ALL* SONS OF ODIN, IN *SPIRIT?*

H-HE WAS SEEN CONVERSING WITH *MIMIR* AT THE *WELL OF WISDOM,* ALL-FATHER--WHILE WE OTHERS READIED FOR *BATTLE.**

THEN HE DID *FLY* FROM ASGARD--AND EVEN SWIFT *VOLSTAGG* COULD NOT HAVE O'ERTAKEN HIM.

AND OUR POWER BE *HALVED*--TILL HIS *RETURN!*

**MORE* ABOUT THAT CONVERSATION IN *THOR ANNUAL* #7, ON SALE SOON. --R.T.

WHILE, IN A LAND AS FAR FROM GLEAMING *BIFROST* AS IT IS FROM OUR OWN *EARTH*--

RISE UP, YE TROLLS AND DWARVES!

THE HOUR IS COME!!

WE SHALL KNOW FULL WELL AS *THEE* WHEN THE HOUR IS COME, CUNNING ONE.

AYE! THE MOMENT IS *NIGH*--BUT 'TIS NOT QUITE *YET!*

THIS IS *WILD!* SPECIAL EFFECTS LIKE THESE WOULD'VE COST *LUCAS* OR *SPIELBERG* A FORTUNE!

SURE, THEY'RE A *REPULSIVE* LOT--BUT I'M A *NEWSMAN*, NOT A *JUDGE!* I'M JUST HERE TO--

LOKI! HAST THOU BROUGHT THIS MORTAL HERE, MAYHAP, TO *SPY* ON US WITH YON STRANGE DEVICE?

UH OH!

LET HIM *ALONE*, MISBEGOTTEN ONE! HE IS A *FRIEND OF LOKI*, AND--

LIAR! THOU HAST *NO* FRIENDS, HERE OR ELSEWHERE!

YOU-- *HERE*--!?

AYE, SCION OF SHADOWS!

WHERE *LOKI* WALKS, SHALL *THOR* FEAR TO FOLLOW?

THIS TIME HAST THOU DARED *TOO MUCH*, THUNDERER!

THOU SHALT *NOT* RETURN THIS DAY FROM *JOTUNHEIM*, LAND OF GIANTS!

I VOWED TO *SLAY* THEE, ON THE *DAY OF RAGNAROK*. THUS, IF 'TIS *COME*--!

THOU DOST SPEAK *BRAVELY*, WHILST HOLDING THINE ACCURSED *HAMMER!*

VILLAIN! CHOOSE THINE *OWN* WEAPON-- OR I'LL FACE THEE WITH *NAKED HANDS!*

NO *NEED*, DEAR "BROTHER"--

LOKI HATH *WELL PREPARED* FOR THIS FINAL RECKONING-- AND NOW FROM *LIMBO* DO I CALL FORTH--

--THE VERY *AXE* WITH WHICH THY FATHER *ODIN* DID SLAY THE FROST-GIANT *YMIR*, EONS AGO!

THE WORLD WAS *YOUNG* INDEED WHEN LAST THIS GLEAMING AXE WAS *USED*--

THUS, 'TIS *MEET* THAT IT BE USED AGAIN WHEN *RAGNAROK* HATH COME 'ROUND AT LAST--

KLA-A-A-NG!

UNNHH--!

--TO SLAY THE *LAST* OF THE GODS, AS ONCE IT SLEW THEIR *FIRST FOE!*

THAT WAS TRULY A *FAR MIGHTIER* BLOW, THAN ANY THOU HAST E'ER *STRUCK* ME!

STILL, *MJOLNIR* WAS FORGED LIKE *NO* WEAPON, BEFORE OR SINCE--

--IN THE FIERY FURNACE OF THE TROLL *GEIRRODUR*--

--AND NOT EVEN THE *ALL-FATHER* E'ER HATH WIELDED ITS *EQUAL!*

THWAAAM!!

FOR LONG MOMENTS, *LIVING LIGHTNING* CASCADES ABOUT DARK *JOTUNHEIM*-- LIGHTING THE LAND OF GIANTS AS THOUGH IT WERE ETERNAL *DAY*--

YET, WHEN THE FIRE HAS *FADED* ONCE MORE...

HAH! 'TIS *TRUE* THAT MJOLNIR BE *SUPERIOR* TO THIS STOLEN AXE, ASGARDIAN.

BUT, I'VE WOVEN *SPELLS*, LONG SINCE-- DESIGNED TO *WEAKEN* THEE BY HALF, SHOULDST E'ER THOU *STALK* JOTUNHEIM AGAIN--

--AND, WITH THY POWER BUT A *SHADOW* OF ITS FORMER SELF, *THOU ART FOREDOOMED!!*

WHAT'VE YOU LET YOURSELF *IN* FOR, RED, OL' BUDDY?

IF *THOR* WINS, HE'S LIABLE TO KICK YOUR TAIL ALL THE WAY BACK TO *EARTH*--

--AND IF *LOKI* WINS, I MAY NOT *HAVE* AN EARTH TO BE KICKED *BACK* TO!

THEN, AS TROLLS, DWARVES, AND STAR-STRUCK MORTAL WATCH, **BOTH** MYSTIC WEAPONS **COME TOGETHER**--

--AND, WONDER OF WONDERS, IT IS **THOR** WHO IS HURLED BACKWARD BY THE MURDEROUS **IMPACT**--

--CRASHING THROUGH THE ROCKY **PEAKS** AS IF THEY WERE BUT THINNEST **GOSSAMER!**

ODIN'S BEARD! LOKI'S CAREFULLY-PREPARED TREACHERY **HATH** TRULY WEAKENED ME-- AS THE **TROLLS** THEMSELVES COULD NE'ER HAVE DONE!

YET HIS OWN VAINGLORIOUS **PRATING** HATH BETRAYED HIM!

FOR, A FOE **FOREWARNED** BE A FOE **FOREARMED**--

AND THOR CAN **DOUBLE** HIS STRENGTH FOR A TIME-- **RESTORING** ALL THAT WHICH LOKI'S SPELL HATH **TAKEN AWAY**--

--BY **CALLING** FOR THAT WHICH E'ER HATH **AWAITED** MY SUMMONS IN FAR-OFF **ASGARD**:

MY **BELT OF STRENGTH!***

*LAST SEEN IN ISSUE #91. --ROY.

I **LIKE NOT** BEING FORCED TO WEAR AN ENCHANTED BELT DESIGNED TO INCREASE MY POWER WHEN I WAS BUT A **GODLING**, NOT YET POSSESSED OF MY **FULL STRENGTH.**

BUT, **ALL ASGARD**-- PERHAPS A **UNIVERSE**, AS WELL-- DOTH DEPEND ON ME THIS DAY--

--SO I **DARE NOT FAIL!**

WHAT **NOW**, COWARD? WOULDST THOU **DELAY** OUR FINAL, FATAL CLASH?

NOT FOR A **HEARTBEAT**, PRINCE OF EVIL!

YMIR'S BLOOD! THY **STRIDE**-- THY RAGING **DEMEANOR**--

THOU ART **REBORN** IN MIGHT!

AYE, **LOOK WELL!** BUT, TO KNOW **FULL WELL** THE EXTENT OF THOR'S RESTORED POWER--

--THOU MUST TASTE IT, AS WELL!

PHRAKK!!

BEFORE THE UN-LEASHED FURY OF THE URU HAMMER, LOKI'S PURLOINED AXE NOW IS SHATTERED ASUNDER--

--NOR DOES THE GOD OF VILLAINY FARE MUCH BETTER!

THEN, THE THUNDER GOD TURNS HIS ATTENTION TO THE VARIOUS-SIZED TROLLS WHICH ROLL TOWARD HIM IN MIS-SHAPEN WAVES...

SLAY THE SON OF ODIN!

AYE! WE SHALL DO WHAT LOKI COULD NOT!

MANY TIMES HATH THOR FACED THEE, MONSTERS--

AND ALWAYS, HE HATH TRIUMPHED!

YET NEVER WAS THE RAGE OF THOR SO UNFETTERED AS TODAY!!

LOKI'S ARCANE SPELL NOW HAS FADED, WITH THE SPLINTERING OF HIS ENCHANTED AXE-- SO THAT THOR'S FULL POWER IS RE-STORED TO HIM.

AND, ADDED TO EVEN THAT IS THE MIGHT GIVEN HIM BY HIS ANCIENT BELT OF STRENGTH.

THUS, HE BECOMES TRULY AN IRRE-SISTIBLE FORCE-- BEFORE WHICH TROLLS AND DWARVES ALIKE ARE THE MOST MOVABLE OF OBJECTS!

LOKI SHALL DO NO HARM-- EVER AGAIN!

NOW, MORTAL-- BRING HITHER THINE INFERNAL GADGET--

--AND I'LL HIE US ALL TO THE GLEAMING REALM!

AS MAGIC MJOLNIR BRIDGES WHAT LESSER MINDS CALL HYPERSPACE, THE SON OF ODIN SAYS NOTHING--

--HIS MIND FILLED WITH IMAGES OF BALDER THE BRAVE, HOVERING AT BEST BETWEEN VIBRANT LIFE AND ETERNAL DEATH.

THEN-- ASGARD!

THANKS, FRIEND-- BUT LOOK, I HOPE YOU DON'T THINK I WAS PART OF ANY PLOT TO--

NAY. BUT, THINE ILK WOULD DO ANYTHING FOR WHAT THOU WOULDST TERM-- A SCOOP.

HERE! HOLD MY BELT OF STRENGTH, UNTIL AND UNLESS I DO ASK FOR IT!

AND PRAY THAT I DO NOT-- FOR THAT WILL MEAN THAT RAGNAROK BE UPON US AT LAST!

BELT... OF STRENGTH...?

TIME PASSES AT A DIFFERENT RATE IN THE LAND OF GODS THAN ELSEWHERE.

THUS, IN THE TIME THOR AND THE OTHERS HAVE BEEN GONE, HERMOD HAS JOURNEYED FORTH TO HELA AND BACK...

...AND ALL HAS GONE, ALAS, JUST AS HARRIS HOBBS PREDICTED:

--BUT, BECAUSE THE GIANTESS THOKK WOULD NOT WEEP, BALDER IS FOR-EVER LOST TO US!

CAN NOTHING, THEN, STAVE OFF THE GATHERING TWILIGHT, SIRE?

FOR, THOUGH I SCATTERED THE TROLLS, THEY WILL SOON RE-GROUP IN NUMBERS BEYOND COUNTING.

CAN NAUGHT PUT OFF THE DAY OF DOOM?

MAYHAP... IT CAN, MY SON.

LONG HAVE I DELAYED MY NEXT ACTION, HOPING AGAINST HOPE THAT SOME OTHER WAY WOULD BE FOUND.

BUT NOW, I KNOW THAT WAS NOT TO BE.

COME THEN, YE GODS AND GODDESSES!

MY LIEGE--THOU DOST PAUSE BEFORE THE BIER OF BALDER.

BE THERE A CHANCE, THEN, OF RESTORING HIM TO LIFE?

NAY, THOR. WHAT HELA HATH CLAIMED, NOT EVEN ODIN MAY FULLY RECLAIM.

YET, THERE IS ONE THING I CAN DO--AND THAT I SHALL!

BY THE HAFT OF MY SPEAR GUNGNIR--

--LET THE ODINPOWER BE DRAINED FROM ME, TO FLOW FREELY INTO AND ABOUT THE DORMANT FORM OF BALDER THE BRAVE--

--THAT, IF HE MAY NOT TRULY LIVE, THEN NEITHER SHALL HE WHOLLY DIE!

THEN, AS THE FOREMOST OF ASGARDIANS SOLEMNLY INTONES, RIVERS OF VISIBLE ENERGY FLOW FROM HIS SACRED SPEAR--INTO THE UNMOVING FORM LAID OUT BEFORE HIM--

--TILL, WITHOUT WARNING--BALDER BREATHES!

SIRE! BALDER LIVES, SUSPENDED 'TWIXT LIFE AND DEATH--AND RAGNAROK IS FORESTALLED!

BUT--WHAT IS WRONG, FATHER? THOU DOST FALTER--!

THOU DOST NOT COMPREHEND, MY SON?

THAT BALDER AND THE GODS SHOULD BE SPARED--ODIN HATH GIVEN UP A PORTION OF HIS OWN POWER!

SO LONG AS THE MYSTIC ODINSHIELD SURROUNDS BALDER THUS--JUST SO LONG SHALL ASGARD STAND!

IF IT FADES--OR ODIN FALLS--BALDER DIES THE DEATH FROM WHICH THERE IS NO REPRIEVE--

--AND LOKI--DAMNED LOKI--SHALL WIN, AFTER ALL!

NEXT ISSUE: THE TRIAL OF LOKI!

PLUS: PERHAPS THE MOST STARTLING NEW SUPER-VILLAIN OF ALL!

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THE MIGHTY THOR®

MJOLNIR IS MINE! THE LADY SIF IS MINE!

CAN THERE BE ANY DOUBT THOR IS DEAD?

THE STARTLING STORY YOU THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER SEE!

THOR VS. THOR!

AND THE WINNER IS--!!

LONG LIVE THE NEW, ORIGINAL THOR!

B/S

When DR. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking-stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic hammer MJOLNIR— and the lame physician is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm, Lord of the Living Lightning— and heir to the throne of eternal Asgard....

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!™

MINE--THIS HAMMER!

THE DANGER OF RAGNAROK IS ENDED-- OR IS IT??

WHAT IS WRONG, FATHER? THOU DOST FALTER--

DOST THOU NOT COMPREHEND, MY SON?

THAT BALDER AND THE GODS SHOULD BE SPARED-- I HAVE GIVEN UP A PORTION OF MINE OWN POWER!*

SO LONG AS THE MYSTIC ODINSHIELD SURROUNDS BALDER THUS-- FOR JUST SO LONG SHALL ASGARD STAND!

THAT LONG-- AND NOT AN INSTANT LONGER!

*AS SEEN AT THE TWILIGHT OF LAST ISSUE'S GOD-TALE.--R.T.

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IF THE ODINSHIELD *FADES*-- BECAUSE I *FALL*-- BALDER SHALL DIE THE DEATH FROM WHICH THERE IS *NO REPRIEVE*--

--AND THE *TWILIGHT OF THE GODS* SHALL BE INESCAPABLY *UPON* US!

THOR-- SHALL I--?

NAY, GOOD FRIGGA! MILADY *SIF* AND I SHALL HELP THE ALL-FATHER TO HIS *THRONE*.

THOUGH SORE IT *GRIEVES* ME TO SEE HIM *SHORN* OF MUCH OF HIS *ODINPOWER*-- EVEN TO SAVE THE *REALM!*

IDUN'S APPLES! SUCH CALAMITY DOTH STAGGER E'EN THE MATCHLESS MIND OF *VOLSTAGG!*

DID IT TRULY TAKE SO *MUCH* OF ODIN'S STRENGTH-- TO FORM SO *FEEBLE* AN AURA ABOUT BALDER'S FORM?

THE POWER OF *HELA, GODDESS OF DEATH,* IS STRONG, FRIEND FANDRAL--

--*THIS* DAY OF DAYS, E'EN MORE THAN *MOST!*

DOES THIS MEAN WE CAN GO BACK TO *EARTH* NOW, MR. HOBBS?

DON'T I *WISH!*

BUT *TV SPECIALS* ON MYTHOLOGICAL GODS DON'T GET FILMED FROM *PARK AVENUE*.

I ONLY WISH I COULD *ENJOY* ALL THIS MORE...

"BUT, IT'S NOT *EVERY* DAY YOU SEE A *GOD* WHO'S LIVED FOR *THOUSANDS* OF YEARS, AT THE VERY LEAST--

"--GET KILLED BY AN *ARROW* FIRED BY A *BLIND* GOD, EGGED ON BY THE NORSE *GOD OF EVIL!**

**YOU* SAW IT, THOUGH-- IN ISSUE*274. --R.

STILL, WE'VE GOTTA *SACRIFICE* FOR THE COMMON GOOD-- NOT TO MENTION THE NETWORK'S EVER-SAGGING *RATINGS*.

SEE IF YOU CAN LOCATE *RED*, WILL YOU, SON?

I CAN'T *PRODUCE* THIS THING AND OPERATE HIS *MINICAM* AT THE SAME TIME.

CHECK, MR. H.! I THINK I SPOTTED HIM OVER *THIS* WAY...!

THOR-- *SIF*-- I KNOW NOT IF MY FAILED STRENGTH WILL RETURN *SOON*--OR *NEVER*--

BUT, I WOULD FAIN HAVE MY *REGAL TRAPPINGS* ABOUT ME--!

AND THAT YOU *SHALL*, MY LIEGE!

HERE BE THY POWER-GIVING ARM-RING *DRAUPNIR*-- FROM WHICH *EIGHT MORE* SUCH RINGS *DROP*-- EVERY NINTH NIGHT.

WHEN *THAT* HAPPENS, SIRE, WILL NOT THEIR COMBINED POWER *RESTORE* TO THEE VIRTUALLY *ALL* OF THY FORMER MIGHT?

AYE...

...BUT ONLY IN TIME, MAYHAP, TO *REVITALIZE* THE ODINSHIELD WHICH ENVELOPES THE COMATOSE *BALDER.*

YET, WE ARE *GODS* ALL, NOT MERE *MORTALS.*

LET *THEM* FEAR DEATH-- WHILE WE OF *ASGARD* RIDE FORTH, TIME AND AGAIN, TO *DO BATTLE* WITH HELA'S HORDES!

WITH MY *RAVENS* AND *WOLVES* ABOUT ME-- *DRAUPNIR* ON MY ARM, AND *GUNGNIR* IN MY HAND--

I AM ONCE MORE *ODIN, LORD OF ASGARD!*

AND NOW, LET THERE *BEGIN* AT ONCE--

--THE TRIAL OF LOKI-- HE WHO HATH BASELY *BETRAYED* THE GODS!

WHILE, NEARBY, WE FIND THE MANACLED **OBJECT** *OF THE COMING LEGALITIES...*

WHAT DOST THOU *PERUSE* SO EAGERLY, MORTAL?

YOU *KNOW,* BUSTER: THOR'S *BELT OF STRENGTH* THAT HE GAVE ME TO HOLD! *

WHY SIMPLY *LOOK* AT IT, MAN OF MIDGARD?

WHY NOT-- *PUT IT ON?*

* LAST ISSUE. --ROY.

YEAH-- *WHY NOT?*

MAYBE IT'LL GIVE *ME* POWER, LIKE IT GAVE *THOR* TO FIGHT THOSE *GI*

*A MAN WITH A WEAKER HEART THAN "***RED***" **NORVELL** MIGHT NEVER RECOVER FROM THE QUASI-ELECTRICAL **CHARGE** WHICH RACES NOW THRU HIS QUIVERING **BODY**...*

AND, AS THE MIDGARDIAN DUSTS HIMSELF OFF...

WH-WHAT HAPPENED--?

THOU FOOL OF FOOLS! THOU DIDST ACT BEFORE I HAD FINISHED.

'TIS NOT ENOUGH MERELY TO DON THE BELT OF STRENGTH.

IT MUST BE DONNED IN THE TEMPLE ATTACHED TO BILSKIRNIR, THE PALACE OF THOR HIMSELF! *

*SEE ANNUAL #5... OR THE ICELANDIC EDDAS, OF COURSE.--ROY.

LIKEWISE, THOU MUST ALSO PUT ON HIS IRON GLOVES THERE, AS THOR DID IN A FAR EARLIER DAY.

I DUNNO! THIS IS STARTING TO SOUND TOO COMPLICATED!

ARE YOU SURE THAT'LL GIVE ME THE POWER OF THOR?

AYE...

...WHEN THOU HAST BATHED, ALSO, IN THE FIRE OF GEIRRODUR...

...THAT SELFSAME TROLL WHO DID FORGE THE MYSTIC HAMMER!

BATHE IN FIRE... SURE I WILL!

STILL, I GOTTA GO THERE ANYWAY-- JUST TO PUT HIS BELT BACK, RIGHT?

"RIGHT," AS THOU SAYEST...

AND, THOUGH ODIN'S LACKEYS COME FOR ME NOW...

...STILL SHALL I BE WITH THEE THERE, FOR MINE OWN MOST SECRET PURPOSE!

LOKI! STAND THEE FORTH!

THOU ART TO BE TRIED, MINE ADOPTED SON, BY A JURY OF THINE IMMORTAL PEERS.

IMMORTAL, SIRE? ART THOU CERTAIN OF THAT?

SILENCE! LET THE TRIAL BEGIN...

AND, IF THESE SEVEN DO FIND THEE GUILTY, THEN MAY THE UNIVERSE ITSELF HAVE MERCY ON THINE EVIL SOUL--

--FOR, AS THE NORN-FATES ARE MY WITNESS-- I SHALL NOT!

AS *PROSECUTOR*, SIRE, I FEEL 'TWOULD BE A *WASTING OF BREATH*--

--TO MENTION *ALL* THE VILE DEEDS LAID AT LOKI'S DOOR.

TIME AND AGAIN, HE HATH *BETRAYED* THEE, WHO DID *REAR* HIM...

...NAY, BETRAYED THE *REALM ENTIRE!*

"THE NOBLE *SILVER SURFER*--THE DREAD *DESTROYER*--THE MIND-SHATTERING *MANGOG*--ALL THESE HATH HE, AT ONE HOUR OR ANOTHER, TURNED *AGAINST* US.

"HE HATH E'ER DESIRED TO *RULE ASGARD* IN THY STEAD...

"...OR, FAILING THAT, TO SEE IT SUFFER *TOTAL DE-STRUCTION!*

AND NOW, IN FULL VIEW OF ALL, HE DID CAUSE THE DEMI-DEATH OF *BALDER*--AND NIGH *RAGNA-ROK* AS WELL, IF NOT FOR THINE *ODINPOWER.*

DO NOT *YET* COUNT THYSELF *SAFE*, THUNDERER!

IF BALDER *DIES*, THE REALM SHALL *STILL* FALL!

ENOUGH! THE DASTARD DOTH STAND CONVICTED OUT OF *HIS OWN MOUTH!*

YET--*NAY!* HE HATH A *RIGHT* TO BE *DEFENDED.*

WELL? IF ANY WOULD *SPEAK* FOR LOKI, LET HIM *NOW COME FORWARD!*

IN ALL THE ASSEMBLED HOST, NO GOD STIRS.

THEN--

A *POX* UPON YE *ALL!*

LOKI, THEN, SHALL SPEAK FOR *HIM-SELF!*

GODS AND GODDESSES OF THE JURY, YE ALL DO KNOW WELL THAT THE **DAY OF RAGNAROK** HATH BEEN **FORETOLD** SINCE TIME'S BRIGHT **DAWN.**

HOW, THEN, CAN **I** BE LOOKED UPON AS CAUSING THAT WHICH **ODIN HIMSELF** DID ONCE DECREE?

THINK OF ME NOT AS A **TRAITOR** TO MINE ADOPTED HOME--

--BUT SIMPLY AS ONE WHO HATH **PLAYED HIS ORDAINED PART!**

AYE, AND THAT MOST **EAGERLY!**

JURY-- CONSIDER YOUR **VERDICT!**

THUS SAYETH **ODIN!**

*THE DECISION IS **NOT** LONG IN COMING...*

WE, THE **PEERS OF ASGARD,** DO FIND PRINCE LOKI **GUILTY OF CRIMES AGAINST THE REALM!**

*THERE IS **NO CHEERING** HERE BEYOND THE RAINBOW BRIDGE AS THE VERDICT IS READ.*

*YET, TRUTH TO TELL, NEITHER IS THERE A **TEAR** SHED...*

*...SAVE, THAT IS, BY **ONE:***

SIGYN-- SHE WHO BE **WIFE** TO EVIL LOKI!

WHAT A **HEAVY BURDEN** BE HERS TO BEAR.

WOULD THAT MANY ANOTHER BORE **JOY** HALF SO WELL!

FIE! I CANNOT **SEE!**

HE CAN'T SEE! **I'M** SUPPOSED TO BE **FILMING** THIS!

WHERE'S **JOEY?** I SENT HIM AFTER **RED...** AND NOW THEY'RE **BOTH** GONE!

MAYHAP A **DIFFERENT VIEW** WILL--

HOOOH!

BLAST! THAT **VOLSTAGG** MADE ENOUGH NOISE FALLING TO WAKE UP THE **DEAD,** IN ANY PLACE BUT **ASGARD.**

I SURE HOPE **BIG DADDY ODIN** DIDN'T HEAR--!

BUT, HE MOST DEFINITELY **DOES!**

THOR! I HAVE WARNED THEE **OFT ENOUGH** ABOUT THESE MORTALS!

SEND YON SCOUNDRELS DOWN TO **EARTH** AT ONCE, OR I SHALL--

IT SHALL BE **DONE,** ALL-FATHER.

AW, HAVE A **HEART,** THOR-BABY! JUST A LITTLE **LONGER,** TILL WE SEE ABOUT THIS **RAGNAROK** THING, AND--

NAY! WHERE BE THY TWO **FRIENDS,** HARRIS HOBBS?

YE MUST ALL DEPART-- **NOW!**

ONE PRESENT, HOWEVER, IS **INTRIGUED** BY THE QUESTION ASKED BY THOR...

WHERE **ARE** THE OTHER TWO MORTALS?

ONE OF THEM, AT LEAST, INTERESTED CONDEMNED **LOKI...**

...WHO, THOUGH BOUND FAST, CAN YET SEND HIS **ASTRAL SELF** A-WANDERING...

...AYE, EVEN INTO THE **HOUSE OF THOR** ITSELF, WHERE--

NO! I--I CAN'T **DO** IT!

I **WANT** TO REACH INTO THOSE FLAMES-- AFTER THOSE **IRON GLOVES** LOKI TOLD ME ABOUT-- BUT--

STILL PLAYING THE **FOOL,** I SEE!

LOKI-- HERE!?

IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING.

THOU SHALT **NOT** PERISH, MAN OF MIDGARD, FOR THE **BELT OF THOR** SHALL PROTECT THEE.

STEP INTO THE FIRE OF GEIRRODUR-- IF THOU WOULDST WIN FORE'ER THE **LOVE OF THE LADY SIF!**

SIF!? YES-- **YES!** I'VE **GOT** TO DO IT!

EVER SINCE I **SAW** HER-- I CAN'T **LIVE** WITHOUT HER!

I'VE **GOTTA** TRY IT-- **NO MATTER WHAT!!**

WELL-- HERE GOES THE PROVERBIAL *NOTHING*--!

RED-- *STOP!*

YOU'LL *KILL* YOURSELF!!

HUH? GET *AWAY* FROM ME, KID! YOU DON'T *UNDERSTAND*-- I GOT *NO CHOICE!*

BESIDES, IT *DIDN'T HURT* WHEN I STUCK MY HAND IN THERE-- SO *MAYBE*--

YOU'RE STOPPIN' *NOTHING*, LITTLE MAN--

YOU'VE GONE *CRAZY*, RED! I'VE GOTTA *STOP* YOU--!

--EXCEPT MY *FIST!*

UNNH!

NOW, MORTAL! DO IT *NOW*-- ERE THE MOMENT *PASSES!*

NO! IT *WON'T* PASS! I WON'T *LET* IT!!

RED-- *DON'T!*

OH MY GOD--!

FOR A FROZEN YET FINITE *ETERNITY*, A LOOK OF SUPREME UNMITIGATED *HORROR* GRIPS THE FEATURES OF THE YOUNG SOUND-MAN NAMED *JOEY*...

...ONLY TO BE *REPLACED*, IN THE SHADOW OF AN INSTANT, BY... *SOMETHING ELSE.*

WHILE *LOKI'S SPIRIT* VANISHES, IN A BURST OF SHEER *MALIGNANCY*, FROM THE *TEMPLE OF THOR*--

--LEAVING ONLY HIS MOCKING, MIRTHLESS *LAUGHTER* BEHIND!

HA HA HA HA H

AS, BACK BEFORE ODIN'S THRONE...

FOR THE FINAL TIME, MORTAL... I SAY THEE NAY!

YOU'RE THROWING ME TO THE WOLVES, OLD BUDDY! IF I DON'T GO BACK WITH THIS SPECIAL, I'M ALL WASHED UP ON NETWORK ROW!

I AM SORRY, MY FRIEND, BUT--

AT LEAST LET ME GET A SHOT OF YOU ASGARDIANS PUNISHING LOKI-- WHATEVER THEY'RE GONNA DO TO HIM--!

BAH! THEY WILL DO NOTHING TO ME, DOLT!

LISTEN, YE GODS! DO YE NOT HEAR??

HEAR? HEAR WHAT, TRICKSTER? SEEK NOT TO CONFOUND US WITH THY--

BY THE SACRED SCEPTRE!

RRM

MBL

THAT WALL-- IT'S CRACKING--!

MILORD THOR! WHAT CAN IT BE--?

DON'T LOOK TO THAT LOSER FOR ANSWERS, LADY!

HE'S NOT THE LORD HIGH MUCKAMUCK AROUND HERE-- NOT ANY MORE!

CLEAR THE WAY, PEOPLE-- AND GET RID OF THAT BLOND-HAIRED, FANCY-TALKIN' CLOWN!

BUT-- WHO IN ODIN'S NAME ART THOU?

WHO DO YOU THINK I AM, YOU FAIRY-TALE FREAKS?

I'M THE REAL THOR-- GOD OF THUNDER-- AND YOU'D BETTER BELIEVE IT!

THOR! THAT'S RED, MY CAMERA-MAN-- BUT HE'S GONE CRAZY!

HE LOOKS BIGGER, TOO-- STRONGER-- AND HE THINKS HE'S YOU!

I THINK I KNOW WHAT HATH OCCURRED, HARRIS HOBBS-- AND I MUST NEEDS STOP HIM!

YOU'RE WELCOME TO TRY, YOU NORDIC HAS-BEEN!

BUT, A COUPLE OF YOUR ASGARDIAN BUDDIES JUST DID--

SLAM!

--AND LOOK WHAT IT GOT THEM!

RED NORVELL-- "THOR"--

I HAVE MADE THEE STRONG AS THOR, AS I DID PROMISE.

NOW FREE ME, AS WAS OUR BARGAIN!

WE DIDN'T HAVE A BARGAIN, HORNTOP.

I'M THE ONE TOOK THAT WALK IN THE FIRE-- AND NOW THAT I'M THOR, WHO NEEDS YOU?

TWICE NOW HAST THOU SAID IT, IMPOSTOR.

THOU SHALT NOT DO SO A THIRD TIME.

I AND I ALONE BE THOR--

--AS I NOW SHALL PROVE, BY MIGHT AND MJOLNIR!

ALL-FATHER! WHY DOST THOU NOT INTERVENE?

IF THE MORTAL HATH GAINED E'EN HALF THE POWER POSSESSED BY THOR, A BATTLE 'TWIXT THEM MAY DEVASTATE ALL THE REALM!

AND IF I DIVERT MINE OWN POWERS TO THIS FRAY, THEN THE ODINSHIELD WILL FADE-- BALDER WILL BE IRRETRIEVABLY HELA'S--

--AND ALL ASGARD SHALL FALL!

NAY, MILADY SIF-- THE TRUE THOR MUST BATTLE YON UPSTART ALONE.

FOR ASGARD'S SAKE, ODIN MUST STAND APART-- AND DO NAUGHT!

I'VE **NO NEED** OF SUCCOR, MY FATHER!

WITH MINE ENCHANTED **HAMMER** IN HAND, I SHALL **SMITE** THE INTRUDER BACK TO WHENCE HE **CAME**.

Y'KNOW, I'M GLAD YOU **SAID** THAT, GOLDI-LOCKS, 'CAUSE IT **REMINDED** ME--

--THAT YOU'VE **GOT** SOMETHING THAT **BELONGS TO ME NOW!**

BY FENRIS' GAPING JAWS!

*EONS AGO, WHEN HE WAS STILL **TOO YOUNG** TO WIELD MYSTIC MJOLNIR UNAIDED, THOR WAS GIVEN BY ODIN A PAIR OF **IRON GLOVES**.*

*WITH THEM, HE **COULD** HANDLE THE EERIE MALLET.*

*NOW, BACKED BY THE FABLED **BELT OF STRENGTH**, THE ALTERED RED NORVELL'S HANDS REACH OUT ALMOST **INSTINCTIVELY**---*

*--AND, AMAZINGLY, THEY **STOP** THE DESCENDING HAMMER IN **MID-AIR!***

*THE NEXT MOMENT, EVEN MORE ASTOUNDINGLY, THE SON OF ODIN **FALLS** BEFORE ONE OF THE TRANSFORMED MORTAL'S PILE-DRIVER **FISTS**--*

BTAM!

*--AS THE **OTHER** GRASPS THE **MAGIC HAMMER** -- AND TAKES IT **FROM** HIM--*

*--SOMETHING **NO** MAN OR IMMORTAL HATH **E'ER DONE** BEFORE!*

THIS BE **BASE TRICKERY!** NEVER BEFORE IN **AGES WITHOUT NUMBER** HATH ANY SAVE **THOR** WIELDED DIVINE MJOLNIR.

NAY, FANDRAL! BEHOLD HOW **ODIN** HIMSELF DOTH GIVE THE **IMPERIAL SIGN** WHICH MEANS--**STAND BACK!**

WE **DARE NOT** INTERFERE!

COME, HOGUN--**WE MUST**--

HOW FORTUNATE FOR THE RANK **PRETENDER**-- OR **VOLSTAGG** HIMSELF WOULD HAVE LAID HIM LOW!

NOR IS **ANY** MORE SURPRISED THAN HE WHO, TILL MERE MINUTES BEFORE, DID THINK HIMSELF THE **ONLY** THUNDER GOD IN ASGARD...

'TIS MADNESS UNFETTERED!

E'EN WEARING MY MYSTIC **GLOVES** AND **BELT**, THE MORTAL SHOULD STILL BE **WEAKER** THAN I!

IN SOOTH, THERE MUST BE **MORE** TO THIS BASE TREACHERY THAN MEETS THE **EYE!**

I WOULDN'T **KNOW** ABOUT THAT, PAL.

ALL I KNOW IS, IF ONLY **THOR** CAN SWING THIS COCKA-MAMEY **SLEDGE-HAMMER** OF YOURS--

WHY, THEN, THAT **ALONE** OUGHT TO **PROVE MY POINT**, NAMELY--

--THAT **I'M** THE ONLY THOR THERE IS NOW, AND **YOU'RE**--

WELL, I DON'T KNOW **WHO** YOU ARE--

WHAM!

AND **FRANKLY**, MY DEAR, I DON'T **GIVE** A DAMN!

HAH! WHAT'S **WRONG**, BABY?

CAN'T YOU EVEN **STAND UP** WITHOUT YOUR BIG BAD **HAMMER**?

THOR! WE BE FORBIDDEN TO **FIGHT** FOR THEE, FOR REASONS ONLY THE **ALL-FATHER** CAN KNOW--

BUT, LET US **MINISTER** TO THEE, AT LEAST, SO THAT--

NAY, GOOD FANDRAL! STAND THEE **BACK!**

WHEN I CANNOT STAND **UNAIDED**, MAYHAP 'TWILL BE **TIME** THAT ASGARD DID BOAST A **NEW** GOD OF THUNDER!

YET, SO LONG AS *BREATH* REMAINS IN MY BODY, I SHALL *FIGHT ON*-- AS BEFITS A *SCION OF ODIN!*

THEN MAYBE YOU BETTER GET YOUR OLD MAN TO GIVE *YOU* ONE OF THEM *ODINSHIELD* THINGS, *TOO!*

VILLAIN! I SHALL BATTLE *TO THE DEATH*-- E'EN THOUGH *MJOLNIR* ITSELF BE TURNED AGAINST ME!

OH? GONNA TRY TO BLAME IT ALL ON THE *HAMMER*, HUH?

WELL THEN, I'LL JUST TUCK IT *AWAY* IN MY BELT--

--AND TAKE YOU ON *LEON SPINKS* STYLE!

SO BE IT!

*AS IF HURLED FROM SOME MAMMOTH CATAPULT, THE **YELLOW-TRESSED** THUNDER GOD HURLS HIMSELF AT THE **RED-HAIRED** ONE--*

--WITH *LESS* THAN HAPPY RESULTS.

I'LL *ADMIT*, I DON'T *UNDERSTAND* WHAT'S GOIN' DOWN--

THOOM!

BUT IT FEELS *RIGHT*, SOMEHOW-- LIKE I WAS *BORN* TO BE THE *THUNDER GOD!*

AND, TO COIN A *CLICHE*, CHUM--

UHNN--!

HA HA

THIS CLOUD AIN'T BIG ENOUGH FOR *BOTH* OF US!

OKAY-- READY TO SAY *UNCLE*?

NOT-- WHILST I DO *LIVE*--!

LISTEN-- DON'T MAKE ME *KILL* YOU--!

I WANTED YOUR *POWERS*-- AND I *GOT'EM*-- BUT I'M *NO MURDERER!* I--

ERE THIS FIGHT-- BE *ENDED*, MAD-MAN-- THOU SHALT BE EITHER A *MURDERER*-- OR A MAN *DEFEATED*.

THERE CAN BE-- NO *THIRD* COURSE.

SORRY YOU *SAID* THAT, CHAMP...

...'CAUSE YOU'RE NOT LEAVIN' ME MUCH OF A *CHOICE!*

BTH!

THERE! *THAT* OUGHT TO TAKE THE *FIGHT* OUT OF YOU!

CRIPES! YOU'RE STILL TRYIN' TO *GET UP*--!?

AYE-- USURPER! LET THOR BUT STAND-- *ONCE MORE*--

--AND I SHALL--

ARRRRGHH!

YOU *MADE* ME DO THIS-- DO YOU HEAR ME? YOU *MADE* ME!!

I COULD FEEL ALL THIS *ENERGY* SURGING THRU ME-- SO I FIGURED I COULD SEND IT OUT THRU THE *HEAD* OF THE HAMMER, LIKE I'VE HEARD THAT *YOU* DO.

I CAN SEE NOW I'VE *GOTTA* KILL YOU-- OR YOU'LL KILL *ME*, SOONER OR LATER!

ALRIGHT THEN-- I'VE COME *THIS* FAR--!

NNOOOO!

STOP HIM! HE WOULD SLAY MY BELOVED!

HASTEN, ASGARDIANS! AH, IF ONLY VALIANT VOLSTAGG COULD REACH THE FORE-FRONT OF BATTLE...!

NOW I STRIKE, GRIM HOGUN-- WHETHER ODIN GIVE THE SIGN OR NAY!

AND HOGUN WITH THEE, MY FRIEND!

KEEP BACK, YOU MYTHOLOGI-CAL MISFITS!

MAYBE I'M JUST STARTIN' TO LEARN THIS HAMMER'S BAG OF TRICKS-- BUT I SEEM TO HAVE A REAL GIFT FOR IT--

--SO YOU MIGHT AS WELL BREAK FOR LUNCH!

HELA'S SWORD! HE HATH THROWN UP A WALL OF MYSTIC FIRE AROUND HIMSELF AND THOR!

CHECK! WHAT'S MORE, IN THE FEW SECONDS IT'LL TAKE FOR YOU GODS TO FIGHT YOUR WAY THRU IT, I'M GONNA SMASH ODIN'S LITTLE BOY CLEAR BACK INTO THE TEXTBOOKS!

G'BYE, PAL! SORRY TO DO THIS, BUT--

YET, EVEN AS THE "NEW THOR" AIMS MIGHTY MJOLNIR--

--SOMEONE ELSE ENTERS THE SCENE-- SOMEONE WHO, COMING FROM A DIFFERENT DIRECTION, WAS ALREADY WITHIN THE AREA WHEN THE FIERY RING WAS FORMED--!

RED! LISTEN TO ME! IT'S JOEY!

YOU CAN'T KILL HIM, RED! I WON'T LET YOU! I--

GET OUTTA THE WAY, KID! IT'S TOO LATE TO--

GOOD LORD!

ZRAK!

AAAA!

I--I DIDN'T *MEAN* TO--

OH MY GOD!

YOU'VE *KILLED* HIM, RED!

DID YOU *HEAR* ME? YOU'VE *KILLED JOEY!*

LOOKS LIKE MY LITTLE *FIRE-WALL'S* FADED AWAY.

BUT MAYBE I *WON'T* HAVE TO KILL *THOR*-- OR ANYBODY *ELSE*-- AT THAT.

SIF-- I DID IT ALL FOR *YOU*, GOD-LADY!

COME AWAY WITH ME--AND I WON'T *CLOBBER* YOUR OLD BOYFRIEND ANY MORE!

NAY! I SHALL FIGHT YOU *MYSELF*--!

--AND *LOSE!* THE WHOLE *GANG* OF YOU CAN'T BEAT THE POWER *I'VE* GOT, AND YOU *KNOW* IT!

OKAY, I'LL LET YOU BE EVEN *NOBLER* ABOUT IT:

COME *WITH* ME-- OR I'LL *DESTROY THE ODINSHIELD!*

THAT'D BE THE END OF *BALDER*-- *ASGARD*-- THE WHOLE *SHEBANG!*

AND OF *THEE*, AS WELL, MAYHAP--!

I COULD CARE *LESS!*

WELL? WHAT'LL IT *BE?*

LET MY *FALLING SWORD*...BE MINE ANSWER...!

YOU DID *RIGHT*, BABY.

I'M GONNA TREAT YOU GOOD...*REAL* GOOD.

PRETTY SOON YOU'LL FORGET ALL *ABOUT* YOUR OLD BOYFRIEND.

S'FUNNY! LOOKING AT THIS SHINY FLOOR, I JUST SAW MY REFLECTION AND REALIZED--

--THAT THE "THOR" I TURNED INTO LOOKS JUST LIKE THE PICTURES OF STATUES I USED TO SEE IN OLD STORYBOOKS!

WONDER HOW COME.

OH WELL-- GOLDILOCKS NEVER DID LOOK LIKE THE REAL THOR, ANYHOW.

I REMEMBER READIN' HOW THOR WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A RED-HEAD-- JUST LIKE ME!

WONDER IF THAT'S JUST A COINCIDENCE, OR--

NUTS! NO SENSE TRYIN' TO FIGURE OUT JUST WHAT HAPPENED.

I'M JUST GONNA ENJOY IT-- FOR MAYBE A MILLENNIUM OR TWO.

BELOW, THE GATHERED GODS TURN NOW--

--TO LOOK WITH DAZED EYES AT ODIN, WHO HAS EVER BEEN THEIR TOWER... THEIR TIMELESS PILLAR.

AND HE SEEMS NOW NOT SO MUCH THE LORD OF ASGARD...AS A FATHER WHO KNOWS HE MAY WELL LOSE HIS ONLY SON TO DUSKY DEATH.

THE FIRE IS GONE NOW FROM THE ONE EYE HE HAS LEFT... AYE, AND SEEMINGLY FROM HIS VERY SPIRIT.

AND, IF THE FLAMES THAT BURN IN ODIN'S SOUL BE BANKED AND DIM...

...THEN WHAT OF THE BLAZING ODINSHIELD WHICH ALONE PREVENTS FALLEN BALDER FROM BEING FULLY POSSESSED BY THE GODDESS OF DEATH?

WE THINK YOU ALREADY KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT...!

NEXT ISSUE: TIME OF THE TROLLS!

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THE MIGHTY

THOR®

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KILL THOR--AND ASGARD FALLS!

ALONE I STAND-- WITHOUT MY HAMMER-- AGAINST THE HORDES OF HELA!

AND IF I FAIL-- THE DAY OF DOOM IS UPON US!

JB + BM

When DR. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking-stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic hammer MJOLNIR— and the lame physician is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm, Lord of the Living Lightning— and heir to the throne of eternal Asgard....

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!™

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TIME OF THE TROLLS!

THE DAY OF RAGNAROK IS HARD UPON ETERNAL ASGARD!

WHAT'S MORE, A TV CAMERA-MAN HAS BEEN TURNED, BY MYSTIC MEANS, INTO THE "NEW THOR"-- AND, AFTER DEFEATING OUR GOLDEN-HAIRED GOD IN PITCHED COMBAT, HAS TAKEN THE LADY SIF AND STREAKED OFF TO PARTS UNKNOWN...!*

WOE TO ASGARD-- ON THE DAY I DID ADOPT EVIL LOKI INTO MINE IMMORTAL FAMILY!

'TWAS HIS DOING THAT THE RED-TRESSED MORTAL GAINED THE POWER-- AYE, E'EN THE MAGICAL HAMMER-- OF MY MUCH-LOVED SON!

AND 'TIS THE FAULT OF ODIN, THEN, IF THIS BE THE HOUR OF THE GODS' OWN DEATH!!

*LAST ISH-- BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT! IT'S WAY TOO COMPLICATED TO GO INTO NOW! --ROY.

LG/69

A DISTRESSED **HARRIS HOBBS**, HOWEVER, WOULD **DISAGREE** WITH THE ALL-FATHER...

JOEY-- **DEAD!** THE LIFE OF **BALDER**-- HANGING BY A **THREAD**--!

IS-- IS **THIS** WHAT I SET IN MOTION-- WHEN I SNEAKED INTO ASGARD WITH A **TV CAMERA CREW**?*

*ISSUE*273.--R.T.

NOW, **ONE** OF THOSE I BROUGHT WITH ME LIES **DEAD**-- AND THE OTHER IS A **MURDERER**, WHO THINKS HE'S **THOR**-- AND HAS THE **STRENGTH** TO BACK IT UP!

ASGARD-- THE **EARTH** ITSELF-- MAY BE **DESTROYED** AT ANY MOMENT-- AND IT'S **ALL MY FAULT!**

NOT SO, HARRIS HOBBS!

EH? **WHO**--?

LOOK **BEHIND** THEE, MORTAL-- AND **REJOICE!**

THOR-- **ALIVE**-- AND **STANDING!**

AYE... IF **UNSTEADILY.**

MAYHAP **OTHER** GODS... WOULD HAVE **PERISHED**... 'NEATH THE ONSLAUGHT OF MINE ENCHANTED **HAMMER**...

...BUT NOT THE **TRUE**... GOD OF THUNDER...!

BE NOT **OVERSURE** THAT THOU ART THE TRUE **THUNDER GOD**-- FOR, THERE BE A **FLAME-HAIRED ONE** THAT NOW DOTH CLAIM THY NAME AND TITLE!

LOKI! DOST THOU FEEL **NO SHAME** AT ALL-- THAT THE **FATE OF ASGARD** TEETERS IN THE BALANCE, BECAUSE OF **THEE**?

NAY! 'TIS THE DEED I WAS **BORN** TO DO-- SO WHY **RECANT** OF IT?

LOKI IS **BRAZEN** AS EVER, FRIEND FANDRAL.

AYE, HOGUN-- BUT OBSERVE HIS NOBLE WIFE **SIGYN!**

SHE DOTH BEAR GRIEF ENOUGH FOR **BOTH.**

AND NOW, I KNOW YE ALL WOULD KNOW HOW 'TIS THAT A MERE **MORTAL** BECAME A NEW, MORE POWERFUL INCARNATION OF **THOR HIMSELF!**

NOR BE THERE **ANY** TALE THAT LOKI WOULD RATHER **RELATE.**

FOR, THE WORK OF **EONS** HATH COME TO **FRU-ITION** THIS DAY...!

"YET, 'TWAS NOT SO LONG AGO THAT I DID HIE ME TO *DEATH'S DUSKY DOMAIN*-- TO VISIT *HELA*, GODDESS OF DEATH, HERSELF:

HELA-- TIME AND *AGAIN* HAVE I STRIVEN TO BECOME *RULER OF ASGARD*-- ONLY TO BE *BLOCKED* AT EVERY TURN BY *ODIN* AND *THOR*.

IF MY *PRESENT* SCHEME FAILS, 'TIS MY WISH TO CAUSE THE *FALL* OF THE REALM-- AYE, NO LESS THAN *RAGNAROK*-- THE *TWILIGHT OF THE GODS!*

LONG HATH HELA *WAITED* TO HEAR THEE SAY THOSE WORDS, GOD OF EVIL!

THOU HAST COME TO ONE WHO CAN *HELP* THEE...

...ONE WHO PROFITS GREATLY BY THE DEATHS OF GODS *OR* MORTALS.

WATCH NOW AS I RAISE THE PROPHETESS *VOLLA* FROM THE *DEAD!*

VOLLA! WHEN THOU DIDST *LIVE*, THOU DIDST PREDICT THE DREADED *DAY OF RAGNAROK.*

NOW, I *COMMAND* THEE-- TELL US *HOW* RAGNAROK MAY COME TO *PASS!*

THOU DOST *COMMAND*, O HELA-- AND, BECAUSE I AM *DEAD*--

--I MUST *OBEY* THEE NOW, AS NE'ER I DID IN *LIFE!*

ALREADY DO YOU KNOW THAT, FIRST, *EXTREME COLD* MUST BLANKET THE EARTH...

DONE, THESE TWO WINTERS PAST! *SAY ON!*

AND THERE MUST BE *WARS*-- BROTHER TURNED 'GAINST *BROTHER*...

BEYOND THY FONDEST *DREAMS*, OLD WOMAN-SHADE!

NOW, VOLLA-- TELL US *MORE* THAN THOU DIDST TELL *ODIN!*

DRAW ASIDE THE VEIL-- *FURTHER* THAN 'TWAS DRAWN *BEFORE!*

I...CANNOT *RESIST* THEE, GODDESS.

KNOW THAT FIRST *BALDER MUST DIE*-- DIE THE DEATH FROM WHICH THERE BE *NO REPRIEVE*...

MY *PLEASURE!*

...NOR MAY *THAT* OCCUR UNTIL A *MORTAL MAN* HATH DREAMT OF *ASGARDIAN THINGS* WHICH HE ALONE, OF MORTALS, HATH *SEEN!*

ONLY *ONE* MORTAL MALE HATH BEEN TO ASGARD.

HIS NAME WAS... *HARRIS HOBBS!*

"THUS," SAYS HELA, "WE DID SEND *EERIE DREAMS* TO HARRIS HOBBS -- BOTH OF THINGS HE HAD KNOWN AND *FORGOTTEN*, AND OF THINGS HE *COULD NOT KNOW*."

"IN THAT WAY," ADDS LOKI, "WE *HELPED* BRING ABOUT THE *PROPHECY OF VOLLA*...

"...SO THAT, WHEN MY *LAST PLAN* FAILED, DESPITE THE AID OF THE *ENCHANTRESS* AND THE BRUTISH *EXECUTIONER*...

"...AND I WAS *BANISHED TO EARTH*, STRIPPED OF ALL GODLY POWERS..."*

*#267. --ROY.

...I HAD ALREADY *SET IN MOTION* THE EVENTS WHICH WOULD LEAD TO *RAGNAROK!*

ONLY *HELA AND I* COULD HAVE REVERSED THEM THEN.

AND NOW -- *NO ONE CAN!*

LOOK THEE, FANDRAL, HOW ODIN DOTH GROW *WEARY*, WEEPING INWARDLY OF THE *EVIL* HIS ADOPTED SON HATH WROUGHT!

BUT NOT EVEN THE *ALL-FATHER* CAN ERASE WHAT THE *MOVING HAND* HATH WRIT LARGE.

AYE, NOR SHALL E'EN THE *REALM OF THE GODS* STAND FOR LONG, IT SEEMS -- FOR, *BEHOLD* --

--THE FIERY *ODINSHIELD* ABOUT THE BIER OF MARTYRED *BALDER* DOTH BURN LOWER, E'ER *LOWER* -- E'EN THOUGH POWERED BY *ODIN'S OWN ESSENCE!*

AND, IF E'ER *IT* DOTH DIE -- BE IT *TODAY*, OR A *THOUSAND EONS* HENCE --

--THEN TOO SHALL *RAGNAROK* TRULY OCCUR, AND *ASGARD PERISH!*

LOKI CONTINUES:

OTHER PROPHECIES, TOO, WE WRUNG FROM THE WRAITH OF VOLLA, BY MEANS BEST LEFT UNSUNG.

FOR, WE DID WISH TO KNOW MORE DETAILS CONCERNING THOSE THINGS SHE DID REVEAL WHEN SHE DID RESIDE IN DOOMED ASGARD ITSELF...*

--AND, THESE THINGS SHALL HAPPEN, WHICH WERE NOT KNOWN TO VOLLA BEFORE--

--BUT WHICH SHE MAY SEE IN DEATH, THAT SHE COULD NOT SEE IN LIFE...!

*IN THE IMMORTAL 200th ISSUE.--R.

"SHE TOLD US," LOKI GOES ON TO DESCRIBE, "OF THE DEATH OF HEIMDALL, GUARDIAN OF THE RAINBOW BRIDGE--

"--A TELLING EVER DEAR TO MY HEART!

"THEN SHE DID SAY AGAIN THAT THOR AND LOKI WOULD MEET IN FINAL COMBAT, AMID AN ASGARD IMPERILLED--

"--AND THAT, THOUGH LOKI SHOULD FALL-- THOR WOULD ALSO DIE!

"GLADLY SHALL I DIE-- IF THOR DOTH NOT OUTLIVE ME!

"THE THUNDERER, SHE SAID, SHALL DIE BENEATH THE GREAT FANGS OF THE MIDGARD SERPENT--

"--WHICH, IN PERISHING ITSELF FROM WOUNDS INFLICTED BY THOR, SHALL TAKE ALL ASGARD DOWN TO RUIN WITH IT...

--SO THAT THE GOLDEN REALM, WHICH WOULD NOT BEND THE KNEE TO LOKI, SHALL SURVIVE HIM NOT!

HAH! I SEE BY THINE EYES, DEAR "BROTHER"--

I KNOW ONLY THAT THOU DOST BELIEVE IT TO BE TRUTH, GOD OF EVIL--

--THOU DOST KNOW I SPEAK THE TRUTH!

--AND THAT BE ENOUGH FOR ME TO DESPISE THEE, AS E'EN I HAVE NE'ER DONE BEFORE!

MY FATHER-- LOKI HATH TOLD ME MUCH, BUT SCARCELY ALL!

I STAND PREPARED TO PERISH, IF PERISH I MUST, IN DEFENSE OF ASGARD-- BUT STILL I WOULD KNOW:

HOW DID A MERE MORTAL-- E'EN ONE WEARING MY BELT OF STRENGTH AND IRON GLOVES--

--GAIN MINE OWN POWERS, MINE IDENTITY-- E'EN MJOLNIR ITSELF, WHICH BE MY RIGHT ARM?

TELL ME, ALL-FATHER-- I BEG IT OF THEE!

BUT, ODIN SAYS NAUGHT...ONLY CONTINUES TO CONCENTRATE, GRIMLY, ON THE EVER-LESSENING FIRES OF THE ODINSHIELD.

THOU CANST NOT, OR WILL NOT SPEAK THEN, SO BE IT!

THY DECISION BE NOT MINE TO QUESTION.

ONE THING, HOWE'ER, I SHALL DO, E'EN IF IT FLIES IN THE FACE OF VOLLA'S PROPHECIES--!

ASGARDIANS! TAKE THEE THE PRISONER-- TO THE APPOINTED PLACE OF PUNISHMENT!!

I SAY THEE NAY! IT CANNOT BE!

I MUST BE FREE, TO PLAY MY PART IN THE END THAT NEARS!

AND, IF THE NORN-FATES WILL NOT SET ME FREE--

--THEN LOKI SHALL FREE HIMSELF!!

YMIR'S BLOOD!

HE HATH BURST HIS BONDS!

AYE! AND, WHILE I SENSE THAT MYSTIC FORCES KEEP ME FROM FLEEING ASGARD--

STILL, NO POWER E'EN HERE CAN REACH ME TO HARM ME--

--WHEN I BE ENCASED IN ENCHANTED STONE!

EYE OF THE ALL-FATHER!

TRULY, IT BODES EVIL FOR THE REALM ETERNAL, WHEN LOKI CAN EVADE OUR JUST WRATH--

--BREAKING ASGARDIAN BONDS LIKE WREATHS OF GRASS, AND USING POWERS LONG DENIED HIM BY ODIN HIMSELF!

KRUTCH!

E'EN OUR OWN AXES, FORGED ON GODLY ANVILS, CANNOT SHATTER YON MONOLITH.

STAND YE BACK THEN, GODLINGS!

MAYHAP THINE AXES BE UNAVAILING--

MAYHAP I MYSELF STAND BEREFT OF MJOLNIR--

STILL, THE STRENGTH OF THE THUNDER GOD IS A FABLE TOLD THROUGH UNENDING AGES, E'EN BEFORE THE VIKINGS DID KNOW OF IT--

AND, FOR THE DEATH OF BALDER--

--FOR THE PLOTTING OF RAGNAROK--

--FOR A THOUSAND THOUSAND HEINOUS CRIMES--

--LOKI SHALL BE PUNISHED!

SHRAK-K!

'TIS BEYOND ALL BE-LIEVING!

E'EN WITHOUT THINE URU HAMMER, THOU STILL HAST SHATTERED MINE ENCHANTED SHIELD--

--AS IF 'TWERE MERE MARBLE QUARRIED ON MIDGARD!

TAKE HIM TO THE APPOINTED PLACE!

AYE, MILORD THOR!

NAY! THIS CANNOT BE! RAGNAROK DOTH DRAW NIGH, MOMENT BY MOMENT--

--AND 'TIS WRITTEN THAT LOKI SHALL BE FREED IN THAT HOUR!

THEN, LET THE NORN-FATES OR DEAD VOLLA FREE THEE, GOD OF EVIL--

--FOR, WE THINE IMMORTAL BROTHERS SHALL NOT!

BEYOND ASGARD PROPER IS LOKI CARRIED...

--AND MADE FAST WITH ADAMANTINE CHAINS, HAMMERED INTO THE VERY BED-ROCK OF THE PLACE.

FOOLS! I SHALL BE FREE-- ALMOST BEFORE YE ARE RETURNED TO ASGARD!

MAYHAP 'TIS TRUE...

...BUT, 'TWILL NOT BE WE WHO WILL FREE YOU.

NOR SHALL THY STAY, WHETHER LONG OR SHORT, BE UNEVENT-FUL.

FOR A MOMENT, FORGETFUL OF PROPHECY, LOKI WONDERS WHAT THE DEPARTING GODS MEANT.

THEN, SUDDENLY-- HE KNOWS!

A HUGE VIPER APPEARS ON THE LEDGE ABOVE HIM, DRIPPING MYSTIC VENOM FROM ITS WIDE-GAPING JAWS...

AND, WHEN IT TOUCHES THE FACE OF LOKI--

IT BURNS LIKE THE FLAMES OF MUSPELLS-HEIM!

YYAAA

THOR! SEE HOW, WHEN LOKI SHAKES FROM PAIN, ALL ASGARD QUAKES!

AYE! E'EN VALIANT VOLSTAGG CAN SCARCELY STAND.

BUT STAND YE DO, BOTH-- AND ASGARD, AS WELL!

'TIS A GOOD OMEN!

FRIGGA-- I PRAY THEE, INTERCEDE TO THINE HUSBAND, WHO DOTH RULE US ALL!

EVIL HE MAY BE-- AND WELL DESERVING OF HIS FATE-- BUT STILL HE BE MY BELOVED!

I, OF ALL WOMEN, KNOW HOW A WIFE'S LOVE MAY ENDURE ALL-- E'EN A HUSBAND'S RASHNESS.

I SHALL GO WITH THEE, BRAVE SIGYN, TO THE THRONE!

SIRE-- ALL-FATHER, AND AUSTERE AND NOBLE HUSBAND MINE-- THY SPOUSE FRIGGA DOTH BESEECH THEE--

LET SIGYN GO TO RELIEVE LOKI OF AT LEAST A PART OF HIS DECREED TORMENT-- IN THE NAME OF WIFELY LOVE!

ODIN GIVES NO OTHER SIGN... BUT NODS, EVER SO SLIGHTLY.

I THANK THEE, BE-LOVED! GO NOW, GOOD SIGYN-- AND FEAR NO INTER-FERENCE!

LOVE IS A POWER THAT E'EN THE GODS CANNOT BIND!

LOKI, DEAREST! I HAVE BROUGHT THEE THIS VESSEL-- ALL I COULD FIND--!

THEN HOLD IT, WOMAN, OVER MY FACE-- AYE, AND QUICKLY--

FOR, THE VENOM OF THE SERPENT IS AN EVER-RENEWING THING--

--AND THE PAIN OF IT IS MORE THAN I CAN STAND!

HASTEN, WOMAN! AGAIN IT FALLS TOWARD ME--!!

I HAVE IT, MILORD!

THANK HELA! I COULD NOT HAVE--

SPLAT!

WAIT! SIGYN-- WHERE DOST THOU--?

THERE IS SO MUCH OF THE VILE LIQUID, HUSBAND--

ALREADY, THE BOWL IS FILLED!

I MUST EMPTY IT--!

AND WHILE SHE DOES-- STILL MORE OF THE UNHOLY VENOM SPLATTERS THE FACE OF THE GOD OF DECEPTION AND TREACHERY--

AAAA

--SO THAT ASGARD DOTH TREMBLE ONCE MORE, AS 'TIS WRITTEN IT SHALL NE'ER DO TILL THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS DRAWS NIGH--

--A TWILIGHT DOOMSDAY WHICH THOSE OUTSIDE THE REALM MAKE READY TO HASTEN!

STAND YE READY, TROLLS-- BOTH YE OF GREAT SIZE, AND YE OF SMALLER STATURE!

AYE, GREAT HELA!

ALL THE FORE-ORDAINED HORDES STAND PREPARED TO DO THY BIDDING, GODDESS OF DEATH!

THEN WE DARE WAIT *NO LONGER* FOR THE ABSENT *LOKI* TO JOIN US!

FOR, I CAN SENSE THAT THE *ODIN-SHIELD* WHICH PRESERVES THE QUASI-LIFE OF *BALDER* DOTH BURN LOWER STILL-- AND, IN A FEW MOMENTS MORE, MAY *PERISH* ENTIRE!

WE MUST *STRIKE*-- E'ER THE *TIME OF RAGNAROK* SHALL HAVE *PASSED*, PERHAPS NE'ER TO COME AGAIN!

FORWARD, YE TROLLS!!

*ROLLING LIKE SOME GREAT, OBSCENE **WAVE**, THE FORCES OF DARKNESS STALK TOWARD ASGARD-- **DEATH-GODDESS** AND **TROLLS** AND GREAT WOLF **FENRIS**, AT LAST UNBOUND.*

*AND NOW, FROM THE MIASMIC MIST BEHIND THEM, THE **MID-GARD SERPENT** REARS ITS HUGE, WEDGE-SHAPED HEAD--*

*--THAT HEAD WHICH IS FORE-DESTINED TO **DEVOUR THOR**, EVEN AS HE CAUSES ITS DOOM.*

*FOR, WHAT **FEAR** CAN EVEN DARK-SOME **DEATH** HOLD-- FOR THOSE WHO ARE THEM-SELVES **DEATH INCARNATE**?*

*WHILE, ON A WORLD **FAR DISTANT** IN TIME AND SUB-SPACE...*

OKAY, GIRLIE-- THIS IS *IT*, I GUESS.

YOUR *HOME SWEET HOME* FOR THE NEXT *MILLENNIUM* OR THREE!

*ONCE, THIS MAN WAS "**RED**" **NORVELL**, TV CAMERA-MAN.*

*A BIT **CRUDE** HE WAS, PERHAPS... BUT HE SEEMED AS GOOD AS **ANY**.*

*BUT THEN, **LOKI** USED HIS DESIRE FOR THE LADY **SIF** TO SEDUCE HIM INTO BATHING IN THE **FIRE OF GEIRRODUR**-- AND NOW HE HAS BECOME **AS ONE** WITH THE **THUNDER GOD HIMSELF**--*

SET ME *FREE*, MORTAL-- I *BEG* THEE!

*--EVEN TO **DEFEAT**-ING HIS BLOND NAMESAKE, AND TAKING HIS **BE-LOVED**-- AND HIS MAGIC **HAMMER**!*

ASGARD DOTH NEED *ALL* ITS CHAMPIONS!

DON'T CALL ME *MORTAL*, MISSIE!

I'M *NOT* A MORTAL-- NOT ANY *MORE!* I'M THE *GOD OF THUNDER*-- THOUGH I'LL ADMIT I DON'T KNOW QUITE *WHAT* THAT MAKES YOUR *EX-BOYFRIEND*

SO, YOU MIGHT AS WELL GET *USED* TO--

WELL THEN THERE NOW, AS *JAMES DEAN* USED TO SAY...

WHAT HAVE WE *HERE?*

PEACE AND *GREETINGS*, OUTSIDER! WE ARE THE *LJÓS-ALFAR*, OR *BRIGHT-ELVES*...

...AND THIS IS OUR HOME... *ALFHEIM*, BY NAME.

SO WADDA YOU AN' YOUR GNOME-BUDDIES *WANT*, SHORTIE?

ELVES, SIRE; WE ARE THE *BRIGHT-ELVES*, AS I SAID.

WE HAVE COME TO *WELCOME* YOU ON YOUR *VISIT* TO OUR LAND.

VISIT? YOUR LAND?? LIKE *BLAZES* IT IS, TWERP!

MAYBE YOU'VE *HEARD'A* ME. THE NAME'S *THOR*--

SURELY, THE *SHEER POWER* INHERENT IN THE BELT OF STRENGTH-- THE IRON GLOVES-- AND ALMIGHTY *MJOLNIR*-- HATH DRIVEN HIM *MAD!*

AND ANYPLACE I CHOOSE TO HANG MY HELMET THESE DAYS--

THWI

--IS *MINE!!*

THERE! I GOT A HUNCH THEY KNOW WHO'S THE *BOSS* AROUND HERE, FROM NOW ON.

THEY'LL MAKE A GREAT BUNCH'A *GOFERS*, NOW THAT I THINK OF IT.

SEE, BABY? DIDN'T I *TELL* YOU I'D TREAT YOU *RIGHT*?

IF THOU WOULDST DO *THAT*, THEN *FREE* ME--

--TO STAND OR DIE WITH *ASGARD* IN ITS *HOUR OF PERIL!*

YOU GOTTA BE *KIDDING!* WE JUST *GOT* HERE.

NOW, WHY DON'T YOU JUST *SIT* A SPELL, AND--?

I SAY THEE *NAY!*

I CAME AWAY WITH THEE PERHAPS TO SAVE MY BELOVED'S *LIFE*--

--BUT I'LL HAVE *NAUGHT* TO DO WITH ONE WHO BE BUT THE *SHADOW* OF THE THUNDER GOD!

MAYHAP, IF I KEEP HIM *DIS-TRACTED*...!

Y'KNOW, I BEEN *WONDER-ING* ABOUT THAT, MISSIE.

NOT TO LOOK A *GIFT-HORSE* IN THE MOLARS, BUT I'M STILL NOT SURE JUST *HOW* I BECAME *ANOTHER THOR!*

I BELIEVE *I* KNOW.

THEN *TELL* ME, ALREADY!

"'TWAS NOT SO MANY *YEARS* AGO, AS MEN RECKON IT, THAT *ODIN* DID OBSERVE FROM ON HIGH AS *THOR* DID BATTLE ON *MIDGARD* WITH THOSE WHOM THY KIND DO CALL... *SUPER-VILLAINS.*

I FEAR MY SON MAY *EXHAUST HIS STRENGTH* IN DEFENSE OF THE PLACE KNOWN AS *EARTH.*

WHAT IF, ONE DAY, HIS POWERS BE NEEDED TO SAVE *ASGARD* ITSELF--

--AND HE HATH *SPENT* ALL HIS RESOURCES, TO THE SORROW OF HIS *HOMELAND?*

WHAT *MEANEST* THOU, ALL-FATHER?

MAYHAP, LADY SIF... AND MAY-HAP *NOT.*

BRING *GEIR-RODUR THE TROLL* TO ME!

SURELY THE *POWER OF THOR* IS A *BEACON* WHICH SHALL SHINE *FOREVER.*

THE MIND OF ODIN DOTH CONCEIVE A *PLAN.*

"THEN, WHEN THE *TROLL* WHO HAD FORGED MIGHTY *MJOLNIR* HAD DONE HIS WORK--

"--ODIN CALLED HIS *SON,* AND ORDERED HIM *INTO* THE RAGING FLAMES!

WHAT *ODIN* DOTH COMMAND-- *HIS SON* SHALL DO!

"AND, WHEN HE CAME *OUT* AGAIN...

THE FIRES FELT *PASSING STRANGE,* SIRE-- BUT DID NOT *HARM* ME.

I PRAY THEE, WHAT BE THEIR *PURPOSE?*

I WILL TELL THEE *ANOTHER* DAY, MY SON... WHEN IT BE *TIME.*

"THEN, WHEN THOR HAD *RETURNED* TO EARTH...

BEHOLD, MILADY SIF--THOU WHO DOST *LOVE* AND *HONOR* THE SON OF ODIN--

CANST THOU TELL THE *DIFFERENCE* BETWEEN THY *BELOVED*--

--AND *YONDER IMAGE*, WHICH BE THE *ESSENCE OF THOR*-- AS IT DOTH EMERGE FROM THE *FIRES OF GEIRRODUR?*

'TIS *ANOTHER* THOR-- LIKE HIM IN *ALL THINGS*, SAVE THE POSSESSION OF AN *URU HAMMER!*

MJOLNIR BE *ONE* THING WHICH, BY MINE OWN DECREE, CAN *NE'ER* BE DUPLICATED, IN ANY SPACE OR TIME.

STILL, THIS IMAGE BE *SOLID*-- WITH THE *POWER OF THE THUNDER GOD* RESIDING WITHIN IT!

AND ITS *PURPOSE*, SIRE?

ONE DAY, WHEN THE REALM DOTH FACE A *DIRESOME FOE*, AND THOR BE *NOT AT HAND*--

--I MAY *CALL* UPON THIS ESSENCE, SO *LIFELIKE*, YET ITSELF *UNLIVING*--

--*PLACING* THAT IMMORTAL ESSENCE INTO ANOTHER, *LESSER* GOD--OR PERCHANCE E'EN A CHOSEN *MORTAL*.

THUS MAY THOR ACT TO *PROTECT* ASGARD, E'EN IN HIS *ABSENCE*.

THUS, THOU HAST *DEBASED* AND *MISUSED* THE PLAN OF ODIN--

--FOR THINE OWN *SELFISH PURPOSES!*

SO WHAT'D BIG DADDY ODIN EVER DO FOR *ME*?

NOW, LEMME *ALONE* FOR A WHILE, OKAY?

I GOTTA *DIGEST* ALL THIS NEWS...!

BUT, *TILL* THAT DAY, THAT ESSENCE MUST RESIDE WITHIN HIS *BELT OF STRENGTH*-- AND THESE *IRON GLOVES*--

--TWIN TALISMANS WHICH DID *AUGMENT* HIS POWER, WHEN HE WAS *YOUNG* AND A *GODLING*, NOT YET POSSESSED OF HIS *FULL STRENGTH*.

THUS SPEAKS ODIN!

HE DID *LIKEWISE* TELL ME THAT HE WHO DID *PUT ON* THE ESSENCE OF THOR-- WOULD HAVE A SPECIAL AFFINITY FOR *MJOLNIR* ITSELF.

'TIS WHY, DOUBTLESS, THOU WERT ABLE TO *WREST* IT FROM HIM, IN THE *SHOCK OF BATTLE*.

BUT, THAT ESSENCE CAN BE PUT ON *ONCE ONLY*-- BY *ONE* MAN OR GOD--

THE EARTHLING'S DIGESTION SOON TRAILS OFF INTO SEPULCHRAL SNORES...

HE SLEEPS-- KNOWING I CANNOT LEAVE THIS PLACE WITHOUT HIS AID.

I KNOW I CANNOT LIFT THE HAMMER OF THOR...

BUT PERCHANCE, IF I COULD REMOVE THE BELT OF STRENGTH FROM HIM, WITHOUT HIS AWAKENING--

--I COULD FORCE HIM TO RESTORE ME TO ASGARD, ERE IT DOTH FALL.

SILENTLY, WITH DEFT FINGERS, THE WARRIOR-LADY BEGINS TO UNDO THE GOLDEN BELT.

AND, PERHAPS SHE WOULD ACCOMPLISH HER PURPOSE...

HOWEVER, AT THAT VERY MOMENT--

THE GROUND-- IT TREMBLES SO--!

ENOUGH TO WAKE ME UP-- JUST IN TIME, IT LOOKS LIKE!

RRMMBL

WONDER WHAT CAUSED THAT QUAKE, ANYHOW!?

CANST THOU NOT GUESS, VILLAIN OF VALHALLA?

IT CAN ONLY BE--

"THE GJALLARHORN OF VALOROUS HEIMDALL WHICH HE DOTH SOUND TO SIGNAL THE COMING OF THE TROLLS!

"THE DAY OF RAGNAROK BE UPON US, AT LAST--

"I CAN SEE IT ALL CLEARLY, IN MY MIND'S OWN EYE:

"THE VALIANT STAND OF HEIMDALL-- MY BROTHER-- AS THE HORDES OF HELA DO POUR FROM BLACK ABYSSES ONTO THE RAINBOW BRIDGE!

"THEY DO NOT COME STEALTHILY, THIS TIME, SO THAT NONE BUT MY SIBLING COULD HEAR THEM.

"THIS DAY, THEY CHARGE BRAZENLY-- THE SURER OF VICTORY BECAUSE OF THY BASE ACT--

"--AN ACT WHICH HATH LEFT *THOR*, AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE GODS, TO FACE ASGARD'S FOES *BEREFT OF HIS ENCHANTED HAMMER!*

"WITHOUT *MJOLNIR*, THE POWER OF THOR BE *HALVED*...

"AND, THE POWER OF *MIGHTY THOR* BE HALF THE POWER OF THE *REALM* ITSELF!

"NOR MAY GREAT *ODIN* TAKE A STAND, UNTIL ATTACKED BY THE SNARLING *FENRIS WOLF* ITSELF, AS IT HATH E'ER BEEN *DECREED*.

"FOR, HE MUST KEEP THE *BIER OF BALDER* BURNING, AS LONG AS *POSSIBLE*.

"THUS, THE *SCIONS OF ASGARD* SHALL GO FORWARD TO DO BATTLE WITH THEIR POWER BUT A *FRACTION* OF WHAT IT SHOULD BE--

"YET, TO BATTLE SHALL THEY *GO*, NONETHE-LESS!

"AND, NE'ER KNOWING WHETHER HE DOTH *RECORD* THE GLORIOUS COMBAT FOR AN EARTH WHICH SHALL *SURVIVE* ASGARD'S FALL, OR *NO* --

"--THE MORTAL CALLED *HARRIS HOBBS* WILL DOUBTLESS STRIVE TO *FILM* IT ALL, E'EN THOUGH HE STANDS *ALONE*.

"HE IS, HOWE'ER A *MORTAL*, AFTER ALL-- A GOOD MAN WHO DOTH KNOW THAT HIS *AMBITION* HATH CAUSED ONE MORTAL'S *DEATH*--

"--THINE OWN TURNING TOWARD THE *PATH OF EVIL*--

"--AND, IN A WAY, *RAGNAROK* ITSELF!

"IT SHALL *SUR-PRISE* ME IF HE DOTH NOT *WEEP* MORE THAN HE DOTH *FILM*.

"AND, AT LENGTH-- AS THE *FIERY ODINSHIELD* WHICH ALONE DOTH HOLD *BALDER* BACK FROM THE *FINAL DEATH* BURNS LOWER, AND *FLICKERS OUT*--

"--THERE SHALL BE *NAUGHT* TO KEEP HELA'S OBSCENE HORDES FROM THE SHINING TOWERS OF *ASGARD* ITSELF!

"THEN, WITHOUT *ODIN* BESIDE HIM-- AND WIELDING MERELY A *SWORD* INSTEAD OF HIS *MYSTIC MALLET*, THE TRUE GOD OF THUNDER SHALL LEAD THE *SONS OF THE REALM* FORWARD TO WHAT HE KNOWS SHALL BE THEIR *FINAL GLORY*--

"--BECAUSE OF *YOU*, MORTAL! *BECAUSE OF YOU!*"

FOR ASGAAAARD!

STRIKE, BROTHERS! IF THIS BE THE DAY THAT ASGARD MUST FALL--

NEXT ISSUE: *--LET NONE SURVIVE THE DAY OF RAGNAROK!*

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THE MIGHTY

THOR®

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KEEP OUTTA MY WAY, YELLOW HAIR!

THIS IS A JOB FOR THOR, THE REAL GOD OF THUNDER!

BUSCEMA-McLEOD

AND NOW-- RAGNAROK!

When DR. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking-stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic hammer MJOLNIR— and the lame physician is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm, Lord of the Living Lightning— and heir to the throne of eternal Asgard....

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!™

AT LONG LAST... RAGNAROK?!!

THE GODS OF ASGARD! THEY STAND UPON THE RAINBOW BRIDGE-- AND THEY MAKE READY TO FIGHT FOR THEIR REALM ETERNAL!

YET, HOW SHALL THEY FARE BEREFT OF THE POWER OF GREAT ODIN-- AND OF MJOLNIR, THE SACRED HAMMER OF THOR?

TRULY, EVEN AS GODS AND TROLLS HURL ANGRY EPITHETS AT EACH OTHER, THIS MUST BE THE QUESTION UPPERMOST IN EVERY MIND--!

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LG 176

AND WHAT FOES THESE GODS DO FACE:

TROLL-GIANTS AND TROLL-DWARVES... THE DEADLY FENRIS-WOLF... AND, AMID THEM ALL, HELA, GODDESS OF DEATH!

A THOUSAND THOUSAND YEARS HATH THIS DAY BEEN COMING, YE DOOMED ONES!

YET, WHEN YON GLEAMING SPIRES TOPPLE-- WHEN THE FLOWER OF ASGARD FALL SCREAMING DOWN TO HELA'S REALM--

--IT SHALL HAVE BEEN WELL WORTH THE WAITING!

STRIKE WITH THY SPEARS, THEN, HELA-- AND NOT WITH THY TONGUE ONLY!

E'EN DEPRIVED OF MINE ENCHANTED HAMMER, I SHALL BE GLAD TO FACE ANY OF THY MURDEROUS MINIONS IN SINGLE COMBAT--

--WITH FULL VICTORY GOING TO THE WINNER, AND OBLITERATION TO THE LOSER!

THAT DOTH NOT SUIT MY PURPOSE, SON OF ODIN.

WHY BE CONTENT WITH ONE GOD-- EVEN THEE, THUNDERER-- WHEN MY SCYTHE SHALL CUT DOWN MANY THIS DAY?

WE BUT AWAIT THE COMING OF THE MIDGARD SERPENT-- WHICH HATH CERTAIN DESIGNS ON THEE, O THOR--

AND THEN, THE MOMENT SHALL HAVE COME-- TO STRIKE!

THOU SHALT TRAMP DOWN ASGARD'S GOLDEN STREETS ONLY O'ER THE BODY OF MATCHLESS VOLSTAGG!

ALAS, MY FRIEND-- THY BELATED VALOR SHALL PROVE INSUFFICIENT TO DRIVE BACK HELA'S HORDES.

YET, 'TIS PROUD I'LL BE TO DIE HERE--

--AMID MY FRIENDS, E'EN IN A UNIVERSE GONE MAD!

WHEN THE COMBAT BEGINS, BLIND HODER, IT SHALL BE I, *SIGYN*, WHO SHALL GUIDE THINE *ARCHER'S HAND*, TO KEEP IT *SURE*.

MY THANKS, MILADY SIGYN! BUT, WHAT OF THINE *HUSBAND*? WHAT OF *LOKI*?

I SHALL *RETURN* TO HIM, IF AND WHEN I *MAY*, HODER...

BUT MEANWHILE, THERE SHALL BE *NONE* TO CATCH THE *SERPENT'S VENOM* WHICH DROPS UPON HIM, TO *SCORCH LIKE HELLFIRE*.

STRANGE! 'TWAS PROPHESIED THAT LOKI WOULD BE *FREED* ON THE *DAY OF RAGNAROK*.

MAYHAP, AT ANY MOMENT, I SHALL SEE HIM *JOIN* THOSE FORCES WHICH *OPPOSE* US--

--AND, IN THAT MOMENT, THE LADY *SIGYN* SHALL PERISH OF *SHAME!*

WHILE, IN THE GREAT PALACE, ODIN SITS ALONE.

HIS *ONE REMAINING EYE* WOULD HE GIVE, TO STAND BESIDE HIS SON *THOR* IN THE FORE-FRONT OF BATTLE THIS DAY, AS HE HAS EVER *INTENDED* TO DO WHEN THE *GODS' TWILIGHT* SEEMED NEAR.

YET, ONLY *HIS POWER* KEEPS THE FIERY *ODIN-SHIELD* ABOUT THE BODY OF *BALDER*...

AND ALL DO KNOW THAT, IN THE MOMENT THAT FIRE DIES-- RAGNAROK SHALL BE IRREVERSIBLY, INESCAPABLY HERE!

ALREADY, THAT FLAME IS DIM INDEED--

--GROWING EVER DIMMER, MOMENT BY MOMENT.

WHILE, NEARBY, WE FIND HARRIS HOBBS...

IT'S *BEYOND ALL BELIEF!*

MY SOUND-MAN *JOEY--DEAD--* KILLED BY MY OWN *CAMERA-MAN!*

AND *RED* HIMSELF-- TURNED SOME-HOW INTO AN *EVIL, POWER-MAD* VERSION OF *THOR* HIMSELF!

ALL I *WANTED*-- WAS TO BE *FIRST* WITH A *TV SPECIAL FROM ASGARD!*

NOW IT LOOKS LIKE I'LL BE FIRST-- *AND LAST!*

DON'T KNOW IF *EARTH* WILL FALL, TOO-- WHEN *ASGARD* DOES--

--BUT *WHATEVER* HAPPENS-- I JUST WANT TO *DIE--!*

AS, IN ANOTHER PART OF THIS COSMOS BEYOND TIME AND SPACE...

WELL, MISSIE? YOU WANTED TO SEE YOUR EX-BOYFRIEND, AND SONUVAGUN IF I DIDN'T MANAGE TO GET HIM ON CLOSED CIRCUIT!

THOU DOST MOCK E'EN THE POWER THOU HAST USURPED FROM THE RIGHTFUL THOR!?

RIGHTFUL, SHMIGHTFUL! YOU YOURSELF TOLD ME I'VE GOT SOMETHING CALLED THE "ESSENCE OF THOR" IN ME--

--SOMETHING BIG DADDY ODIN RIGGED UP, AS A FAILSAFE DEVICE AGAINST RAGNAROK HAPPENING WHEN HIS LITTLE BOY WAS OUT OF TOWN!*

THE WAY I SEE IT, THAT MEANS I WAS CHOSEN TO BE THOR, IN A WAY.

AYE, THE ALL-FATHER WAS CARELESS IN HIS ANXIETY NOT TO HAVE PROVIDED MORE SAFE-GUARDS 'GAINST SUCH A VILLAIN AS THEE GAINING THE POWER OF THOR!

I LOVE YOU, LADY. HOW COME YOU'VE GOTTA HATE ME SO MUCH?

*AS EXPLAINED LAST ISSUE. --ROY.

HATE THEE? I CANNOT FIND IT IN MY HEART TO HATE THEE-- BUT ONLY TO PITY THEE.

STILL, THOU ART A FOOL, TO THINK I LOVED THOR MERELY FOR HIS MJOLNIR-WIELDING ARM OR HIS VAUNTED MIGHT.

LOVE IS A POWER THAT DOTH PERMEATE ALL; IT CANNOT BE TRADED ABOUT BY AN EXCHANGE OF HAMMERS!

EVIDENTLY... NOT.

BUT, AS LONG AS YOUR HEART-THROB'S DONE FOR ANYWAY, WHY NOT TAKE UP WITH ME?

MERELY TO ASK SO BASE A QUESTION IS TO KNOW THE ANSWER.

YEAH. I GUESS... I JUST BEEN FOOLIN' MYSELF.

I COULDN'T HELP IT, THOUGH.

I'VE BEEN BATTY OVER YOU, SIF, EVER SINCE I FIRST LAID EYES ON YOU.

AND BECAUSE OF THY LUST, MUST ASGARD BE HURLED TO OBLIVION BY THE HORDES OF HELA?

IS THAT THE LEGACY THOU WOULDST LEAVE TO THINE OWN WORLD--IF INDEED IT SURVIVES THE HOLOCAUST TO COME?

IS IT??

BUT "RED" NORVELL, A.K.A. THOR, DOES NOT RESPOND.

MEANWHILE, BOTH IN THE **ENCHANTED POOL** OF ALFHEIM AND IN THE **STARK REALITY** OF ASGARD, THE **FORCES OF DARKNESS** AT LAST ASSAULT THE KINGDOM'S **DEFENDERS**-- AS IF SOME **UNSEEN BARRIER** HAS SUDDENLY FALLEN!

THOR! THIS CAN ONLY MEAN-- THE **ODINSHIELD FIRE** HATH DIED--

--AND SO HATH **BALDER!**

WASTE NO WORDS, FANDRAL, BUT **FIGHT ON!**

WHETHER WE **TRIUMPH** OR **PERISH,** LET IT E'ER BE SAID THAT THIS WAS **ASGARD'S SHINING MOMENT!**

AND INDEED, MORE THAN **ONE** OF THE TOWERING TROLLS GOES DOWN BE-FORE THE THUNDER GOD'S **SLASHING ATTACK**--

--FINDING THAT, IN THOR'S RIGHT HAND, A **SWORD** MAY BE AS DEADLY A WEAPON ALMOST AS A **HEAVENLY HAMMER!**

STILL, ONE BY ONE, IT SEEMS THE **PROPHECIES OF VOLLA*** COME TRUE--

--AS **HEIMDALL,** GUARDIAN OF THE RAINBOW BRIDGE, **FALLS** BENEATH THE PRESS OF GROTESQUE BODIES--**TO BE SEEN NO MORE ALIVE!**

AND MORE THAN **ONE** ASGARDIAN RECALLS THOSE LONG-AGO WORDS OF THE SEERESS:

"WITHOUT **CEASE**-- WITHOUT **LET**-- THE CATACLYSMIC BATTLE **RAGES,** AS THE ONCE-HALCYON REALM BECOMES A **SEA OF FLAME!**"

*ISSUE #200. --R.

THEN, WITHOUT WARNING-- A FACE BOTH **FIENDISH** AND **FAMILIAR** APPEARS AMONG THE EMBATTLED THRONG-- TO ENACT A DRAMA **OLD AS TIME...**

WHAT? THOR STILL **LIVES?**

LOKI SHALL **REMEDY** SO GRIEVOUS AN **ERROR!**

BROTHER-- ART THOU **MAD?**

I KNOW NOT HOW THOU WERT **FREED**--BUT WITH **RAGNAROK** UPON US--

--THERE BE **NO** TIME FOR **HATRED!**

THE HATE I BEAR **THEE** CAN OUTLIVE **TIME** ITSELF!

LET **OTHERS** LIVE IN FEAR-- WHILST **LOKI** STRIKES FOR **PLUNDER!**

THEN **LET** THY HATE SUSTAIN THEE NOW-- FOR **NOTHING ELSE** CAN SAVE THEE!

WHEN **VOLLA** SPOKE THESE WORDS, HER VOICE CRACKING, SHE SPOKE OF A **GOD OF EVIL** WHO FACED A **THOR** ARMED WITH MAGNIFICENT **MJOLNIR,** NOT A MERE BLADE.

--**SUCCEEDS,** WHERE SHEER **PROWESS** NEVER COULD!

THOU DIDST SHATTER THE **AXE OF YMIR** WITH THINE **HAMMER,** BUT **THAT** BLADE WILL NOT STAND 'GAINST THIS **SWORD OF SURTUR!**

PREPARE TO DIE-- AT THE HAND OF LOKI!

THUS, NOW, THE SCENARIO IS **CHANGED--**

--AND **LOKI'S SWORD,** WHICH HAS LONG BEEN **PREPARED** FOR THIS DAY--

YET, IN HIS **BATTLE-MADNESS,** THE BETRAYER SEEMS TO FORGET ONE OF THE **FOREMOST** OF VOLLA'S FORETELLINGS--

-NAMELY, THAT HIS SHALL **NOT** BE THE BLOW THAT **SLAYS** THOR!

A DEAFENING **ROAR** SHAKES BOTH EARS AND ASGARD--

--RENDING THE STONE BRIDGE **ASUNDER,** AS IF IT WERE A **THING OF CLAY**--

--EVEN AS A **FETID STENCH** BLOWS ACROSS THE **GLEAM-ING REALM!**

SLEIPNIR'S HOOVES! THEN-- THE LEGENDS OF VOLLA DID **NOT** LIE!

THE **MIDGARD SERPENT** DOTH APPEAR AT LAST!

MY BROTHER HATH **FLED**-- BUT **THOR** MUST EVER STAND HIS GROUND!

HAVE AT THEE, JORMUNGAND!

IF THOU WILT BE **THOR'S SLAYER,** AS HATH BEEN FORETOLD, THOU MUST FIRST O'ERCOME HIS TRUE-HURLED **SWORD!**

IN DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES, EVEN MYSTIC **MJOLNIR** HAD NOT POWER ENOUGH TO **DESTROY** THIS CREATURE WHICH IS ITSELF THE **ULTIMATE DESTROYER.**

HOW MUCH **LESS** DOES A MERE **BLADE** FAZE IT!

BUT STILL, **THOR FIGHTS ON!**

NOT **ALL** THE POWER OF ODIN'S HEIR DOTH RESIDE IN MINE **HAMMER,** THOU SLIME-BORN ONE--

THERE BE ALSO--

--THE SHEER STRENGTH OF HIS MIGHTY ARM!

STRONG IS THAT ARM-- BUT STILL THE DEATH-WIELDING EYES OF THE MID-GARD SERPENT CAN MELT MERE ROCK--

--AS EASILY AS THOUGH IT WERE BUTTER, HURLED INTO A FIERY FURNACE.

THINE EYES WILL NOT PROTECT THEE FORE'ER, MONSTER!

AND THEN--

AT THAT MOMENT, THE THUNDER GOD IS STRUCK BY JORMUNGAND'S HUGE THRASH-ING TAIL!

THRAK!

THE SECOND BOULDER FALLS FROM HIS ARMS-- AND THOR HIMSELF IS TOPPLED--

--TO LIE VERY, VERY STILL.

HOGUN! VOLSTAGG! WHILST LASHING OUT, THE SERPENT'S TAIL DID FELL OUR PRINCE!

THEN TO HIM-- ERE THE HATED ONE CAN DEVOUR HIM!

ASIDE, FRIENDS! LET ME SIT UPON HIS TAIL, THAT IT MAY NOT--

HELA'S HELLIONS! IS E'EN VOLSTAGG'S GIRTH OF NO AVAIL, IN THE END?

NAY! LOOK UP, LADS!

THE MIDGARD SERPENT BUT REACTS TO A MOST STARTLING SIGHT ABOVE IT--

--THE SIGHT OF THE MORTAL WHO DOTH CALL HIMSELF THE NEW THOR!!

NOBODY BUT, LOSERS!

THE LITTLE LADY HERE HAS A THING FOR THE ORIGI-NAL-- AND IT TURNED OUT TO BE NON-TRANSFER-ABLE--

SO, I FIGURED I MIGHT AS WELL PLAY HERO, TO MAKE UP FOR ALL THE HARM I'VE CAUSED.

I CAN'T BRING JOEY BACK TO LIFE--

--BUT MAYBE I CAN DO MY PART TO SAVE ASGARD, ANYWAY!

AND WHAT ELSE SHOULD A GUY DO-- WHEN HE'S TURNED INTO THOR, NO LESS?

I'M HURTIN' THIS SNAKE-- BUT IT'S STILL--

WHAMM!

BELOVED! THEN, THOU DOST LIVE, AFTER ALL?

AYE, BUT NOT LONG SHALL ASGARD SURVIVE THE SERPENT'S THRASHINGS!

THE RED-HAIRED MORTAL HATH STRENGTH TO WIELD GREAT MJOLNIR-- BUT HE HATH NOT MY SKILL WITH IT.

YOU'RE DEAD ON TARGET, BLONDIE!

SO HERE! TAKE THE HAMMER! IT WAS ALWAYS YOURS, ANYWAY-- NO MATTER WHAT!

AS FOR YOU, LADY-- AS A WISE MAN ONCE SAID--

"HERE'S LOOKIN' AT YOU, KID!"

MILORD! HE HATH RETURNED TO THEE-- THINE HAMMER!

'TWOULD SEEM THERE BE SOME HUMAN SPARK STILL LEFT WITHIN THE CREATURE THAT "RED" NORVELL BECAME.

YET, WITHOUT MJOLNIR, HE SHALL NOT HAVE THE SHEER FIGHTING PROWESS TO STAND 'GAINST JORMUNGAND.

I HAVE FOUGHT THE SERPENT BEFORE-- AND HE HATH NOT!

WHATEVER THE REASON, THOR ARRIVES AT THE SITE JUST IN TIME TO WITNESS--

BY MIMIR'S WELL OF WISDOM!

"RED" NORVELL HATH SACRIFICED HIMSELF-- THAT THE GLEAMING REALM MIGHT PERCHANCE BE SAVED!

YET, I CANNOT LET HIM DIE-- NOT IF IT IT BE IN MY POWER TO SAVE HIM.

I MUST HIE ME AFTER THEM WHERE'ER THEY MAY HAVE--

THE MIDGARD SERPENT, WOUNDED, DOTH RETREAT INTO THE DEPTH 'NEATH ASGARD--

--BEARING THE TRANSFORMED MORTAL WITH HIM!

THEN, THE NEXT INSTANT--

WHAT IN ODIN'S NAME--?

WE BE ON A PLAIN, GODS AND TROLLS ALIKE--

--NOT IN ASGARD AT ALL, BUT SOME DISTANCE FROM IT!

BE THIS SOME TRICK-- EITHER OF LOKI OR OF SOUL-GATHERING HELA?

BUT, A SWIFT GLANCE FORWARD DISPELS THE THUNDER GOD OF ALL ILLUSIONS ON THAT SCORE--

FOR, THE WEAPON-WIELDING **TROLLS** SEEM AS CONFUSED AS **THOR** HIMSELF BY THIS EERIE TURN OF EVENTS!

HELA! WHAT HATH **OCCURRED?**

ARE WE TO BE **DENIED** THE CONQUEST OF ASGARD-- WHEN WE WERE **SO VERY CLOSE?**

THOR, HOWEVER, HAS OTHER INTERESTS MORE **PRESSING** THAN THE DEATH-GODDESS' **ANSWER**...

THE **MIDGARD SERPENT!**

IT HATH **RETURNED** FROM THE BOWELS OF THE EARTH-- **WITHOUT** THE RED-HAIRED MORTAL!

THAT CAN ONLY MEAN-- THAT HE BE **DEAD!**

THEN, IN THE NAME OF THE **ALL-FATHER**--

THWAMM!

--HE SHALL BE **AVENGED!**

AGAIN, AND YET **AGAIN**, THE GOLD-TRESSED THUNDERER **HAMMERS** AT THE SWAYING, GARGANTUAN COILS OF **JORMUNGAND**--

BWAK!

--SENSING THAT IT HAS BEEN **WEAKENED** BY ITS BOUTS FIRST WITH **HIMSELF**, THEN WITH HIS **EARTH-BORN COUNTERPART**--

--AND NOW, ONCE MORE, WITH THE **TRUE** FIRST-BORN OF ODIN!

YMIR'S FROSTY BEARD!

AGAIN THE GREAT REPTILE DOTH REAR ITS SCALY HEAD-- YET MUCH MORE ***WEAKLY*** THAN BEFORE!

THEN, MAYHAP THE PROPHECIES OF VOLLA BE ***WRONG***, AFTER ALL!

MAYHAP 'TIS NOT ***THOR*** WHO SHALL PERISH IN THE CRUCIBLE CALLED ***RAGNAROK***--

THOR

PERHAPS NEVER BEFORE, IN A ***THOUSAND ETERNITIES***, HAS SUCH A BLOW BEEN STRUCK.

--BUT THE ***MIDGARD SERPENT*** ITSELF!!

THE VERY ***MOUNTAINS*** DO SHAKE-- THE STARRY ***HEAVENS*** DO QUIVER--

--AND IF THE BATTLE WERE TAKING PLACE IN ***ASGARD***, AS IT SEEMED A FEW MOMENTS BEFORE, NO DOUBT THE ***GLEAMING TOWERS*** THEMSELVES WOULD BE TOPPLED INTO ***DUST*** AND ***DEBRIS***!

THOR KNOWS HE CANNOT **SLAY** THE GREAT, SPRAWLING SNAKE--

PTOM!

YET, WITH EVERY **BLOW** OF MYSTIC MJOLNIR, IT GROWS WEAKER-- **WEAKER**--

--TILL **SUDDENLY**--

BY THE GIRTH OF VOLSTAGG!

THE SERPENT HAS **VANISHED**-- **DEFEATED!**

THE PROPHECIES OF VOLLA STAND AT LAST **DISPROVED!**

OH, MY BELOVED THOR-- I DO NOT **UNDERSTAND** ALL THIS-- BUT THANKS BE TO **ODIN** THAT THOU, AND ASGARD, BE **SPARED!**

THANKS TO **ODIN**, O SIF?

AYE... **PERHAPS!**

COME, MINIONS MINE! HELA DOTH CALL THEE BACK TO **HEL** AND **JOTUNHEIM!**

THIS DAY, BY SOME **TRICKERY**, WE HAVE BEEN **DENIED** THE VICTORY THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN OURS.

WE SLEW **HEIMDALL**-- TRAMPLED THE **RAINBOW BRIDGE** UNDERFOOT-- INVADED **ASGARD** ITSELF-- ONLY TO FIND OUR SELVES UPON THIS **BARREN PLAIN.**

IF THIS BE **RAGNAROK**-- THEN ALL WE KNOW BE **FALSE!**

COME! WE MUST FLEE!

IT-- IT'S **OVER!** THE NIGHTMARE HAS **ENDED**, THANK GOD!

AND **RED**-- WHAT HE DID CAN'T BRING **JOEY** BACK TO LIFE AGAIN--

BUT AT LEAST-- HE TRIED TO **MAKE UP** FOR WHAT HE DID!

THE SMILE ON HARRIS HOBBS' FACE **DIES** A-BORNING, HOWEVER, AS HE BEHOLDS A **SOMBRE SIGHT:**

ONE THOR BEARING **ANOTHER**-- INTO THE **REALM ETERNAL** HE PERISHED IN SAVING.

AND, THOUGH HE WAS, FOR SO BRIEF A TIME, A **GOD** WHO WIELDED THE POWER OF THE **LIGHTNING-BOLT**, THE RUMBLING OF THE **THUNDER**...

...STILL, HE NEVER SEEMED SO **TRUE** IN ASPECT...

...AS WHEN HE NOW BECOMES AGAIN THE MAN CALLED "**RED**" **NORVELL**... FOR THE FINAL TIME.

AND, IN THAT SELFSAME MOMENT, A **BLAZING LIGHT** IS SEEN IN ASGARD--

--AS THE FIERY **ODINSHIELD** ABOUT THE BIER OF **BALDER** FLARES ANEW--

--SIGNIFYING THAT **ALL IS WELL** ONCE MORE IN THE **HOME OF THE GODS.**

BUT **SOME**, NOT EVEN THE AWESOME MIGHT OF **ODIN**...

...CAN BRING BACK FROM THE **LAND OF THE DEAD.**

AND NOT ALL THE **TEARS** THE WORLD SHED FOR DYING **BALDER** CAN RESTORE THE BLOOM OF LIFE TO A CHEEK WHERE-FROM IT HAS FLED.

THEN, STILL PUZZLED, THOR AND HIS COMPATRIOTS TURN TO THE **ONLY ONE** WHO MAY, PERCHANCE, **ENLIGHTEN** THEM ON THE DAY'S STRANGE EVENTS...

ALL-FATHER ODIN! THE LADY **SIF** HATH TOLD ME, E'EN IN DEFIANCE OF THY DECREE, OF THE **DOPPEL-GANGER** THOU DIDST CREATE OF ME, TO HOLD IN STORE AGAINST THE **DAY OF RAGNAROK.**

AT LAST I UNDERSTAND **WHY** THE RED-HAIRED MORTAL WAS ABLE TO WREST **MJOLNIR** FROM ME.

BUT, **NAUGHT ELSE** DO WE FULLY COMPREHEND, O FATHER.

WAS IT **RAGNAROK** WE SURVIVED THIS DAY-- OR WAS IT **NOT**??

NOW, GREAT ODIN **RISES** FROM HIS THRONE-- NO LONGER THE **WEARY OLD MAN** WHO COULD SCARCELY KEEP BRAVE BALDER FROM HELA'S CLUTCHES--

--BUT ONCE MORE, THE MIGHTY **KING OF THE GODS!**

THE TRUTH BE **THERE,** MY SON-- FOR ANY WITH E'EN **ONE EYE** TO SEE.

I KNOW, FULL WELL AS **LOKI** AND **HELA,** THE FULL RANGE OF THE **PROPHECIES OF VOLLA--**

--AND THAT THEY TWO WOULD STRIVE **WITHOUT CEASING** TO USE THEM AGAINST THE REALM, TILL THEY WERE **FULFILLED!**

THUS DID I **CAUSE** MANY OF THE PROPHECIES TO BE FULFILLED:

THE **"DEATH"** OF BALDER-- THE **FREEING OF LOKI--**

--AYE, E'EN THE **DEATH OF THOR,** THOUGH NOT OF THE **TRUE** THOR--

--THAT THE DIRE **PROPHECIES** MIGHT BE ACCOMPLISHED, YET **NOT** THE **END OF ASGARD!**

I-- THINK **I'M** STARTING TO GET IT!

THEN PRAY THEE, EXPLAIN IT TO **VOLSTAGG,** MORTAL!

ODIN KNEW THAT EVEN **HIS** POWERS COULDN'T FULLY **OVERTURN** THE ANCIENT PROPHECIES--

--SO HE SET ABOUT TO MAKE THEM **HAPPEN**-- WITHOUT **REALLY** HAPPENING-- TO THROW **HELA** AND HER CREW **OFF BALANCE!**

THAT, THEN, IS WHY WE WERE WHISKED TO THE **PLAIN:** BECAUSE THE BATTLE **NE'ER** TRULY REACHED **ASGARD** AT ALL!

AND MY BROTHER **HEIMDALL**-- AND **ALL** WHO PERISHED IN THE HOLOCAUST--?

ALL SAVE THE **FALSE THOR** WERE BUT **IMAGES,** FORMED OF THE **BRAIN OF ODIN!**

THY **TRUE** SIBLING **LIVES,** AND STANDS ONCE MORE AT HIS **POST--**

"--AND VILE *LOKI*, FOR WHOM I CREATED STILL *ANOTHER* DOPPELGANGER TO DO BATTLE WITH *THOR*, BE STILL *CHAINED* OUTSIDE THESE LOFTY SPIRES...

"...NOT TO BE FREED UNTIL THE *REAL* RAGNAROK DOTH COME TO PASS...

"...IF E'ER IT *DOTH!*

FOR, WE HAVE SEVERELY *WEAKENED* THE FORCES OF HELA THIS DAY-- SET BACK THE WORK OF *MANY MORTAL LIFETIMES*, FROM WHICH SHE'LL NOT SOON *RECOVER!*

BUT, WHY SO *SULLEN* STILL, MY SON?

THOU HAST MADE *PUPPETS* OF US ALL, SIRE-- AND *DESTROYED* TWO INNOCENT *MORTALS!*

NAY! I DID NOT *FORCE* THEM TO DO AS THEY DID.

I MERELY *MADE USE* OF THOSE ACTS WHICH THEY THEMSELVES DID *WILL* TO DO.

E'EN SO, WHEN I WALK AGAIN ON *EARTH*, MY *GUILT* SHALL BE SUCH THAT--

THEN THOU SHALT *NOT* WALK AGAIN ON *MIDGARD!*

TOO LONG HATH THAT HAPLESS REALM DEPRIVED *ASGARD* ITSELF OF THY FULL PROWESS-- THIS TIME, WITH NIGH *FATAL* IMPACT!

FROM THIS MOMENT FORTH, THOU SHALT GO NO MORE TO THE WORLD CALLED EARTH!

WHAT--?

I *LOVE* THEE, MY FATHER... THOUGH *THY* WAYS BE NOT *MINE*. AND I *REVERE* THEE, AS EVERY SON *SHOULD* HIS SIRE.

BUT NEITHER *THOU* NOR ANY *OTHER* SHALL COMMAND THE *GOD OF THUNDER!*

THOU *SHALT* OBEY ME IN THIS, MY SON--

--OR ELSE ASGARD SHALL BE *FORE'ER FORBIDDEN* TO THEE!

THEN *SO BE IT!*

MILADY-- WILT THOU COME *WITH* ME?

I-- I *WANT* TO COME WITH THEE, MY BELOVED-- BUT MY PLACE IS *HERE* NOW!

PLEASE-- FOR *MY* SAKE-- FOR THINE *OWN*-- DO NOT *DEFY* THE ALL-FATHER IN THIS!

SOME *PART* OF THEE BE STILL *JANE FOSTER*-- AND THAT PART DOTH *BELONG* ON EARTH--!

I... *MUST!*

GO THEN--AND NO HAND IN ASGARD SHALL BE RAISED AGAINST THEE--

--UNLESS EVER THOU DOST SEEK TO RETURN!

THAT SHALL I NEVER DO, SIRE-- THAT-WAS!

FROM THIS DAY, I RENOUNCE MY PLACE IN THE REALM ETERNAL--

--AND WOE TO ANY WHO E'ER WOULD STRIVE TO BRING ME BACK!

THE NEXT MOMENT, WITH HARRIS HOBBS AND THE TWO DEAD MORTALS IN TOW, THOR HURLS HIS ENCHANTED HAMMER ABOUT HIS GOLDEN HEAD--

--TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN THAT WORLD AND THIS, AS IF 'TWERE BUT A NARROW STREAM TO BE LEAPED ACROSS.

YET, HOW GREAT AN EFFORT IT TAKES TO MAKE THAT LEAP--ONLY THE SILENT THUNDER GOD CAN KNOW.

THEN, BACK ON A ROOFTOP IN MANHATTAN...

SEE TO THY PERISHED FRIENDS, HARRIS HOBBS!

I HAVE OTHER AFFAIRS THAT SORELY NEED TENDING.

THOR... I--I'M SORRY FOR CAUSING--

'TWAS NOT THOU WHO DIDST BRING THESE THINGS ABOUT, MORTAL-- BUT THE GROWING SCHISM 'TWIXT MY FATHER AND ME!

NOR HAVE I TIME TO GROW MORBID DWELLING ON THEM--

--NOT WHILE THE FATE OF THE EARTH HANGS IN THE BALANCE--

--AND THE JUDGMENT OF THE CELESTIALS DRAWS EVER NEARER, HOUR BY HOUR!

"THE CELESTIALS"?

NEVER HEARD OF THEM!

BUT THEN, I OUGHT TO KNOW BY NOW THAT THE GODS KNOW THINGS THAT WE DO NOT!

DO THEY EVER, HARRIS HOBBS!

OH, DO THEY EVER!

NEXT ISSUE: WHILE THE ETERNALS WAIT!

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THOR

THE MIGHTY

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VIR
REDONDO-75

In the beginning, there was only **BURI**, he who was called the First of the **GODS**.

Then Buri begat **BOR**, and Bor begat the **AESIR**, whose given names were **VE**...**VILI**... and **ODIN**!

And Odin had him **TWO** sons; one of these was **THOR**, the God of Thunder, sprung from his father's loins--while the other he was **LOKI**, orphan of the Storm Giants, **ADOPTED** son of ODIN, Thor's **HALF-BROTHER**.

And days there were when Gods walked the earth with **IMPUNITY**, when the boundaries between **GOOD** and **EVIL** had yet to be clearly **DEFINED**.

This is a **TALE** of those long-gone times.

And it came to pass that a period of great **PEACE** fell upon the eternal realm called **ASGARD**, that golden land beyond the rainbow bridge. The war with the **OLYMPIANS** was long since **OVER** now, no **NEW** specter of **COMBAT** had yet raised its hoary head

And thus, at last, in a great **MEADHALL**, the fabled **IMMORTALS** of Asgard, all **WARRIORS BORN** and having no new **FOE** to battle, did battle amongst **THEMSELVES!**

And, verily, the **GREATEST** of these noble warriors was...

THOR THE MIGHTY!

In truth, it had been he and his comrades who had **INSTIGATED** the conflict in the first place!

Story: LEN WEIN
Art: JIM STARLIN & TONY DEZUNIGA

WHEN NEXT THOU DOST *OPEN* THY BRAGGART'S *MOUTH*, CROMDAR, 'TWILL BE SOLELY TO *ACKNOWLEDGE* THE SON OF ODIN THY *BETTER!*

AYE, AND MY GOOD *COMRADES* AS WELL!

BROK!

I APPRECIATE THINE *EFFORTS* ON MY BEHALF, THUNDER GOD--

--BUT *FANDRAL THE DASHING* DOTH NEED NO *OTHER* MAN OR GOD TO *DEFEND* HIS NOBLE NAME FOR HIM!

CHUD!

NOR DOTH *HOGUN THE GRIM*, FRIEND THOR!

TROK!

ON MY *POOREST* DAY, I CAN VANQUISH FOES *THRICE* AS WORTHY AS *THESE* KNAVES!

BAH! 'TIS BENEATH THE FABLED *DIGNITY* OF VALOROUS *VOLSTAGG* TO BRAWL LIKE SOME COMMON *GUTTER SNIPE!*

I TURN MY *BACK* ON SUCH UNSEEMLY *CHILDISHNESS!*

UUNNFF!!

WOULDST THOU MIGHT TURN THINE AWESOME *STOMACH* AS EASILY, VAST ONE!

Then, from the meadhall's *ENTRANCEWAY*, a solemn *VOICE* spake thusly...

CEASE, I SAY, THEE!

LET THERE BE AN *END* TO THIS UNWORTHY *FOOLISHNESS!*

NOBLE *THOR*, THY GLORIOUS *FATHER* HATH SENT ME TO *FETCH* THEE TO HIM!

IN A *MOMENT*, MESSENGER! SEVERAL OF MY FOES STILL *STAND!*

ODIN DESIRES THY PRESENCE *IMMEDIATELY*, MILORD.

OH... VERY *WELL* THEN.

Verily, the God of Thunder was much **YOUNGER** in those bygone days, his temper more **QUICK**, his heart less **UNDER-STANDING.**

But still was his noble father **MONARCH** of the Realm Eternal, **LORD** over all who lived, be they **MEN**...or **GODS.**

Odin's slightest wish was a **COMMAND** that dare not be **DISOBEYED**, not even by his own beloved son and heir.

Thus, at length, in the gleaming **THRONE ROOM** of the Palace Imperial...

I BID THEE MOST ***WELCOME***, THUNDER GOD. THOU HAST LEAVE TO APPROACH THE ***PRESENCE!***

THOU DIDST ***SUMMON*** ME, ALL-FATHER?

AYE, GOOD PRINCE-- AND THY HALF-BROTHER ***LOKI*** AS WELL, AS THOU CANST PLAINLY SEE!

I REQUIRE A MOST DELICATE ***TASK*** OF YE, MY SONS--

--AND, VERILY, THE FATE OF ***WORLDS WITHOUT NUMBER*** MAY DEPEND ON ITS SUCCESSFUL ***COMPLETION!***

AS EVER, SIRE-- THY WORD IS OUR ***WILL!***

I PRAY THEE-- ***SAY ON!***

THINE ***ENTHUSIASM*** PLEASES ME GREATLY, LOKI --

--FOR THERE BE THOSE WITHIN THE REALM WHO SPEAK ***ILL*** OF THEE, WHO SAY THOU ART NOT TO BE ***TRUSTED***...

...YET, VERILY, OF ***ALL*** THE GODS OF ASGARD, ONLY ***YE TWO*** WOULD I ***TRUST*** WITH THIS MISSION MOST SACRED!

BUT STILL THE ***OBJECT*** OF THIS MISSION REMAINS A ***MYSTERY***, FATHER!

THY ***FAITH*** IN THIS MOST HUMBLE SERVANT DOES ME GREAT ***HONOR***, SIRE.

THOU WOULDST DO WELL TO ***SHARE*** THY BROTHER'S ***PATIENCE***, THUNDER GOD. ODIN'S WAY IS HIS ***ALONE!***

MY SONS, HAST THOU E'ER HEARD OF...THE ***"ONE"***?

AYE, MILORD. THE DARK SEER CALLED ***EDDA THE ELDER*** HATH SAID THAT HE WOULD APPEAR SOMEDAY TO ***OVERTHROW*** THEE!

AYE, FLESH OF MY FLESH, ALL ***THAT*** WAS SAID--AND ***MORE!***

FOR, 'TWAS SAID AS WELL THIS UNKNOWN FOE WOULD COME FROM THE ***EAST***--!

AND THAT HE WOULD HOLD A ***CRYSTAL*** POSSESSED OF SUCH ***POWER*** AS TO HUMBLE EVEN ***THEE!***

I RECALL THE LEGEND MOST ***CLEARLY*** NOW, OMNIPOTENT ONE!

BUT SURELY THE TALE IS LITTLE MORE THAN SO MUCH ***SUPERSTITIOUS NONSENSE***, ALL-FATHER.

I PRAY THEE ***RECALL***, MY BROTHER--THAT TO SOME, ***WE*** ARE MERELY LEGENDS!

IN TRUTH, FOR A TIME, EVEN *I* BELIEVED EDDA THE ELDER'S WORDS NAUGHT BUT *LEGEND*, NOBLE THOR...

BUT *NOW*, MILORD...?

NOW, THUNDER GOD, I FEAR I HAVE MY *DOUBTS*.

SINCE THE BEGINNING OF OUR *INFORMATION EXCHANGE* WITH THE OLYMPIANS, WORDS HATH REACHED MINE EARS THAT DISTURB ME *GREATLY!*

THERE IS *NAUGHT* THAT ESCAPES ODIN'S *NOTICE*, AND THUS I HAVE HEARD DARK *WHISPERS* ON THE MIDNIGHT WIND...

...WHISPERS WHICH TELL OF A MOST FORMIDABLE *CRYSTAL*...

...MAYHAP A CRYSTAL WHICH COULD HUMBLE EVEN THE *MONARCH OF THE REALM ETERNAL!!*

"LEGEND HATH IT THAT THIS CRYSTAL WAS CREATED BY AN *ENCHANTER* WHOSE NAME HATH BEEN LONG SINCE LOST TO *TIME!*

"IN THE *BLOOD* OF THREE-SCORE MEN WAS THIS CURSED CRYSTAL *BAPTIZED*, THREE NIGHTS OVER IN THE FULL OF THE *MOON*...

"...WHILE CERTAIN *PHRASES* WERE BESPOKEN O'ER IT THAT I DARE NOT *REPEAT* EVEN TO *THEE!*

"NOW 'TIS SAID THIS CRYSTAL WAS *UNIQUE* 'MONGST ALL THE *CRYSTALS* OF FAIR ASGARD AND MIDGARD BOTH...

"...FOR THIS ENCHANTED GEMSTONE DID POSSESS THE MOST *POTENT* POWER OF ALL...

"...THE POWER TO GENERATE TOTAL *NON-EXISTENCE!!*"

YET, ***DESPITE*** THIS AWESOME POWER, THAT NAMELESS MAGE AT LAST MET ***DEATH***--AT THE HAND OF A HIRED ***ASSASSIN!***

THEN, FOR YEARS BEYOND NUMBERING, THE BLOOD CRYSTAL ***PASSED*** FROM HAND TO HAND...

...UNTIL, AT LAST, A BEING OF GREAT GOOD WILL AND MUCH WISDOM ***SECURED*** THE MYSTIC GEMSTONE...

...AND THEN DID ***BURY*** IT DEEP WITHIN A CAVERN GUARDED BY ***CREATURES*** FAR BEYOND MORTAL KEN!

VERILY, IF THIS IS ***INDEED*** THE FABLED CRYSTAL OF WHICH EDDA THE ELDER ***SPOKE***, IT MUST BE POSSESSED BY ***ODIN*** ALONE...

...FOR 'TIS ODIN'S ***DEATH*** THAT GEM MIGHT, SOMEDAY SPELL!

THE ***OLYMPIANS***, IT SEEMS, HAVE NO ***USE*** FOR THE CRYSTAL...

...OR ELSE THEY KNOW NOT ITS TRUE ***VALUE!***

THUS, THOUGH IT MAY VIOLATE OUR ***TRUCE*** WITH THE OLYMPIANS, THERE IS BUT ***ONE THING*** WE CAN DO!

AT MY COMMAND, THOU SHALT GET THEE HENCE TO THE ***LAND OF SHADOW***--

--AND BRING ME ***BACK*** THE CURSED ***CRYSTAL OF BLOOD!!***

AYE, ALL-FATHER-- WE SHALL ***RETURN*** WITH THE MYSTIC ***GEMSTONE*** THOU SEEKEST...

...OR, 'PON MY OATH, WE SHALL ***RETURN*** NOT AT ALL!!

Thus, soon...

WHITHER DO WE *TRAVEL*, THUNDER GOD?

TO THE DARKLING CASTLE WHERE DWELLS A *SORCERESS* OF WHOM I'VE HEARD, LOKI--

--IN HOPES THAT SHE MIGHT *AID* OUR NOBLE QUEST!

WITH THE CRYSTAL OF BLOOD IN HIS *POSSESSION*, THERE WILL BE NO *ENEMY OF THE REALM* WHO LIVES THAT MAY STAND AGAINST THE POWER OF *ODIN!*

RATHER AGAINST THE POWER OF *LOKI*, THOU DOST MEAN, DEAR BROTHER--

--FOR, IN THE END, 'TIS THE *GOD OF MISCHIEF* WHO SHALL POSSESS THE ENCHANTED *BLOOD CRYSTAL!*

FOR FAR TOO LONG HATH LOKI BEEN FORCED TO SCHEME HIS SCHEMES IN *SECRET*, FEARFUL OF ODIN'S *VENGEANCE*...

...BUT ONCE THAT MIRACULOUS GEMSTONE IS *MINE* TO WIELD, I WILL NEED FEAR *NOTHING!*

FOR LOKI HIMSELF SHALL BE *FEAR INCARNATE!*

And, at length...

THERE IT DOTH *BE*, MY BROTHER! NOW PRAY THAT THE SORCERESS BE *HOME!*

HAIL, THE CASTLE!!

THE MIGHTY *THOR*, GOD OF THUNDER, SON OF *ODIN*, PRINCE OF THE REALM ETERNAL-- AND *LOKI*, GOD OF *MISCHIEF*--DOTH SEEK *ENTRANCE!*

TURN US AWAY AT THY *PERIL!!*

THERE DOTH BE NO NEED TO *SHOUT* SO, THUNDER GOD! THOU SHALT FIND THE CASTLE BATTLEMENTS *OPEN* AND WAITING!

THE DARK SORCERESS *SHAMBALLA* BIDS THEE WELCOME TO HER HOME!

Thus did it come to pass that the sons of Odin SUPPED at the witch-woman's table--

--and though the repast was both succulent and SWEET, the taste left in their mouths was most BITTER!

THOU DOST SEEM SOMEHOW *DISTRACTED*, GOOD GENTLEMEN. DIDST THOU FIND THY MEAL SOMEHOW *LACKING*?

NAY, MOST FAIR ONE. 'TIS JUST THAT OUR *THOUGHTS* MUST FIRST BE CONCERNED WITH OUR GLORIOUS *QUEST!*

AH--THEN THOU DOST COME SEEKING THE *CRYSTAL OF BLOOD!*

KNOW YE THOU ART NOT THE *FIRST!*

MANY A BRAVE WARRIOR HATH PASSED THE CASTLE OF SHAMBALLA ON HIS WAY TO FIND THAT *GEMSTONE!*

NONE HAVE E'ER *RETURNED.*

PERHAPS *SO*, SORCERESS... BUT NONE HAVE E'ER BEEN *THOR!*

AYE, THUNDER GOD... METHINKS THOU MAYEST WELL BE *RIGHT.*

WILT THOU GIVE US *DIRECTIONS* TO THE BLOOD CRYSTAL THEN, SHAMBALLA-- AND POINT US ON OUR *WAY*?

I SHALL GIVE THEE WHATEVER THOU *DESIREST*, GOLDEN-HAIR.

AYE... *WHATEVER* THOU DESIREST.

Sleep did not come **EASILY** to the Thunder God that eve.

Like unto a great caged **TIGER** did he pace about his bed-chamber, his mind awhirl with **THOUGHTS** that only a **GOD** could truly know.

Thus, did he not **HEAR** the oaken **DOOR** slip open behind him.

DO I ***DISTURB*** THEE, MILORD?

METHINKS 'TIS DOUBTFUL THOU ***COULDST,*** SORCERESS.

HOW MAY I ***HELP*** THEE?

THE ***QUESTION,*** GOLDEN-HAIR, IS HOW MIGHT ***I*** HELP ***THEE***?

I THOUGHT MAYHAP THOU WERT... ***LONELY.***

AYE, THAT I ***WAS,*** FAIR ONE... BUT NO ***LONGER.***

NO ***LONGER.***

SOOTH, BUT THY ***SKIN*** IS FAR ***SOFTER*** THAN AN ANGEL'S ***BREATH.***

AND THE ***SCENT*** OF THEE FAR ***SWEETER*** THAN THE FIRST ***ROSE*** OF SPRING.

THOU ART A ***VISION,*** WOMAN--A ***DREAM*** GIVEN SPIRIT AND SUBSTANCE.

AND I AM ***THINE,*** THUNDER GOD... ***THINE.***

THEN ***COME,*** MY SULTRY SEDUCTRESS, LET US NOT ***TARRY*** ANY...

THORRRRR

HEIMDALL'S EYES! THAT BE ***LOKI'S*** VOICE--!!

NAY, GOLDEN-HAIR-- 'TIS BUT THE MIDNIGHT ***WIND*** WHISTLING THROUGH THE RAMPARTS!

I PRAY THEE-- PAY IT NO ***HEED!***

WOMAN, I *KNOW* MY BROTHER'S *VOICE!*

I BEG THEE, HANDSOME ONE-- DO NOT *ANSWER* HIS CALL!

'TWOULD MEAN THY *DEATH!*

BETTER DEATH THAN *DISHONOR*, SORCERESS!

IF MY BROTHER DOTH REQUIRE MINE *AID*, 'TIS THOR'S DUTY TO HIE ME TO HIS *SIDE!*

VERILY, HE WOULD DO THE SAME FOR *ME!*

SKRAKT!

HAVE *FAITH*, LOKI-- THY BROTHER IS COME TO *DEFEND* THEE!

THEN PRAY THEE, BE *QUICK* ABOUT IT, THUNDER GOD!

A MOMENT *LONGER*-- AND I SHALL BE *LOST* TO THESE MONSTERS MOST FOUL!

BUT SO LONG AS THOR DOTH WIELD THE MYSTIC MALLET *MJOLNIR*--

--THAT MOMENT SHALL NEVER COME TO *PASS!!*

And, like wheat before the scythe, the nameless GNOMES fell back before the savage might of the mallet called MJOLNIR THE DESTROYER...

...returning, at last, to the darkling DEPTHS in which they did dwell.

THOU ART *SAFE* NOW, LOKI.

AYE, BROTHER MINE.

AND WE KNOW NOW WHY THOSE WHO HATH *STAYED* AT THIS CASTLE NE'ER *RETURNED* FROM THEIR QUEST TO FIND THE *BLOOD CRYSTAL*--

--THE SORCERESS *SHAM-BALLA* DID *SELL* THEM TO THOSE WHO DWELL *BELOW*, THAT THEY MIGHT LABOR IN THE SERVICE OF THE GNOMES *FOREVER!*

AYE, GOLDEN-HAIR -- ALL THAT AND MORE IS *TRUE!*

BUT I SWEAR I WOULD NE'ER HAVE OFFERED THEM *THEE!*

THOU DIDST *TOUCH* SOMETHING WITHIN ME THAT HATH NE'ER BEEN TOUCHED *BEFORE*.

ALL I CAN OFFER THEE NOW IS THE *INFORMATION* THOU DOST SEEK... AND THE HOPE THOU SHALT SOMEDAY *FORGIVE* ME.

THE *FIRST* I ACCEPT *GLADLY*, SORCERESS.

THE *SECOND*... ONLY *TIME* WILL TELL.

NOW *COME*, LOKI! THERE BE NAUGHT TO KEEP US *HERE!*

AT THY *SIDE*, THOR... AS *EVER*.

And thus it was that the sons of Odin rode out from the witch-woman's CASTLE...

...Through nameless LANDS where the sun had long since ceased to SHINE...

...Along twisting TRAILS hewn from living rock, where the slightest MISSTEP would plunge one into an inescapable ABYSS...

...Until at length, they did reach the realm that stood BETWEEN all other realms...

LOOK YE *THERE*, MY BROTHER!

...And knew they that their GOAL now stood before them!

'TIS JUST AS THE SORCERESS *DESCRIBED* IT, LOKI!

A GREAT GRANITE *FACE* CARVED INTO THE SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN BY AN UNKNOWN RACE THAT HAS LONG SINCE CEASED TO *BE*...

...WHERE *WINDS* HOWL WILDLY THROUGH TIME-WORN OPENINGS, LIKE THE *WAIL* OF UNTOLD *SOULS* SHRIEKING IN *TORMENT!*

VERILY, LOKI-- WE STAND NOW BEFORE THE CAVERN OF THE SCREAMING SKULL!

AND YON CAVERN ITSELF DOTH STAND AS SOME GREAT *MONUMENT TO MADNESS!!*

METHINKS WE WOULD BE *WISE* TO LEAVE OUR MOUNTS *OUTSIDE* THE CAVERN'S *MOUTH*, BROTHER.

AYE, THEY GROW MORE *SKITTISH* AND *FRIGHTENED* THE NEARER WE DRAW TO OUR *GOAL!*

IN TRUTH, I CANNOT *BLAME* THEM, LOKI. THERE IS AN *AIR* ABOUT THIS PLACE...

...A SENSE OF SOMETHING *WAITING* IN THE DARKNESS...

AYE, THUNDER GOD-- I SENSE IT *TOO!*

VERILY, 'TIS A SENSE OF... *IMPENDING DOOM!!*

And deeper into the smothering DARKNESS did they stride...

...Until a LIGHT glowing dimly in the distance drew them to a torch-lit CHAMBER...

...And they stepped solemnly into the heart of a NIGHTMARE!

AT LAST WE KNOW WHAT *BEFELL* THOSE WHO DID *FIND* THE CURSED BLOOD CRYSTAL!

BY HELA! THOSE PAINTED *STATUES* THAT LINE THE WALLS--THEY SEEM ALMOST *ALIVE!*

INDEED, LOKI--BUT WE SEEK NOT *STATUES* HERE!

THAT *DOOR* AT THE CHAMBER'S FAR END--MAYHAP THE BLOOD CRYSTAL AWAITS *BEYOND* IT!

'TIS *SEALED*--RUTTED SHUT WITH THE WEIGHT OF ITS *YEARS!*

BUT 'TWILL PROVE NO *OBSTACLE* TO THE ENCHANTED HAMMER OF *THOR!!*

KRA-KOOM!

But even as the Thunder God did UNLEASH his mighty weapon, all around the musty chamber, the dust-encrusted FIGURES that had stood mute and unmoving for untold centuries suddenly SHUDDERED...

...And AWOKE!

Silently did they shake off the veil of SLUMBER, and then did step from their shadowed NICHES, weapons at the ready, their grim purpose RENEWED.

Like monstrous SPECTERS did they move, DEATH held high in their hands, their booted feet barely WHISPERING against the cold stone flooring...

...But even a WHISPER proved too LOUD by far!

ZOUNDS!!

DEFEND THYSELF LOKI!!

WE ARE SORE BESET BY--

TITANS!!

FIRES OF VULCAN! THE LITTLE ONE DOTH *MOVE* LIKE THE VERY *WIND!*

I MUST HIE ME TO SAFETY *SWIFTLY--*

-- WHILST THE THUNDER GOD DOTH KEEP OUR MONSTROUS ADVERSARIES *OCCUPIED!*

FOR CENTURIES UNTOLD HAVE WE BEEN CHARGED TO ***PROTECT*** THAT WHICH LIES BEYOND THE ***DOOR*** THOU HAS SHATTERED LIKE...

GREAT ZEUS!

THRANG!

LIKE I HAVE SHATTERED THY SLASHING ***BLADE***, KNAVE?

TRULY, THOU ART NO ***MATCH*** FOR...

AARRGGHH!!

BROK!

TRULY, THINE ***OVERCONFIDENCE*** SHALL BE THE ***DEATH*** OF THEE, LITTLE ONE!

JUST AS ***THOU*** SHALT SUFFER FOR ***THINE***, TITAN!

FOR, THOUGH LOKI BE NOT ***NEARLY*** THINE EQUAL IN ***PHYSICAL PROWESS***--

SHAK!

--STILL DOTH THE GOD OF MISCHIEF POSSESS ***POWER*** ENOW TO ***CONQUER*** THEE!

MY ***THANKS***, BROTHER! THOU HAST PROVIDED ME ***RESPITE*** TO REGAIN MY ***SENSES!***

THEN ***STRIKE***, THUNDER GOD! IN THE NAME OF ***VICTORY***-- ***STRIKE!!***

BY ZEUS! THE LITTLE ONE'S HAMMER--!

THOK!

WHOK!

IT DOTH MOVE AS IF IT WERE ALIVE--!!

UUNGGHH!!

AYE, TITAN, BUT BY FAR ITS GREATEST ENCHANT-MENT IS--

AARRGGHH!!

--IT MUST EVER RETURN TO ITS MASTER'S HAND!

THEN, WITH THY WEAPON IN HAND, SHALT THOU DIE, LITTLE ONE--

CROOM!

--THAT THOU MIGHTEST BE HASTENED ON THY JOURNEY TO THY FABLED VALHALLA!

THOU ART MORE POWERFUL THAN I HAD ALLOWED THEE CREDIT, TITANS--

--BUT STILL IS THE PRINCE OF ETERNAL ASGARD NO HELPLESS VICTIM TO BE EASILY SLAUGHTERED!

And thus, before the savage ONSLAUGHT of his many foes, did the Son of Odin hurtle back through the ancient PORTAL he had summarily SUNDERED mere moments before...

...Until, at last, he and his monstrous OPPONENTS did lay battered and sprawled...

Aye, before the legendary CRYSTAL OF BLOOD...

...And something MORE!

BY THE FLAMING BEARD OF ZEUS! IT CANNOT BE--!!

...Before the great and glistening GEMSTONE that was at the very HEART of his noble QUEST.

From time immemorial, these towering Titans had stood BEYOND this chamber defending the fabled BLOOD GEM, ever faithful to their given task, yet never once SUSPECTING...

BY ODIN.

...that they were but the blood crystal's FIRST line of defense!

For, from the Stygian depths of a dark and bubbling POOL, there abruptly rose the enchanted gemstone's ULTIMATE GUARDIAN...

...and WOE be unto those who dared DISTURB its eternal REST!

BY THE BLOOD OF ARES! WHAT LIVING MADNESS DOTH DWELL HERE??

SWIFTLY, TITANS-- MAKE THY WEAPONS READY...

...OR WE ARE LOST!!

But, alas, for all intents and purposes, the defiant Titans were ALREADY lost...

AAAIIEEEE

...For, at that instant, the serpentine guardian did STRIKE, its razor-toothed jaws SLAVERING in anticipation...

...And the still-dazed God of Thunder did WITNESS the savage slaughter in mute HORROR...

...His heart HEAVY that such VALIANT foes should perish so IGNOBLY!

AAARRGH!!

THOUGH THE TITANS THEMSELVES SOUGHT TO *SLAY* ME, STILL I CANNOT STAND IDLY BY AND SEE THEM *DEVOURED* BY... *ZOUNDS!*

TITAN-- BEHIND THEE!!

IN THE NAME OF ZEUS-- *NAY!*

NAY!!

STAND THY *GROUND*, TITAN-- *DEFEND* THYSELF!!

TURN THY *BACK* TO THE DEMON-- AND IT SURELY SHALL *SLAY* THEE!

But the FEAR which did clutch the Titan's heart far outweighed the Odinson's WISDOM...

...And thus did the towering warrior race headlong to his own DESTRUCTION!

THE FINAL TITAN ***SLAIN***, THE BEHEMOTH TURNS TOWARDS ***ME***--

--BUT ***NOW*** IT DOTH CONFRONT A FOE OF ***EQUAL*** METTLE--

--A FOE WHO SHALL NOT ***FALTER***, SHALL NOT ***FLEE!***

NOW, DEMON-BEAST, DOST THOU FACE THE PRINCE OF ***ASGARD***-- THE SON OF ***ODIN***-- THE LIVING ***HEIR*** TO THE THRONE OF THE ***REALM ETERNAL!***

NOW DOST THOU FACE ***THOR***, BEHEMOTH-- GOD OF ***THUNDER***-- MASTER OF THE RAGING ***STORM***, THE LIVING ***LIGHTNING***--!

THOR, WHOSE ENCHANTED HAMMER DOTH POSSESS SHEER ***POWER*** ENOW TO ***DESTROY*** THEE WITHOUT ***MERCY!!***

SO ***FALL***, THOU CRAVEN CREATURE-- ***FALL!!***

BY THE BRISTLING BEARD OF ODIN-- THE BEHEMOTH DOTH YET ***STAND!!***

'TIS AS IF MY MOST POTENT ***POWER-BURST*** WAS NO MORE TO IT THAN THE NOISESOME ***STING*** OF THE MOST INSIGNIFICANT ***INSECT!***

BUT THE BATTLE BE NOT YET *OVER*, SERPENT-BEAST!

THY GAPING *JAWS* DOTH HOLD NO *TERROR* FOR A *WARRIOR BORN!*

THOU ART *HELPLESS*, DEMON, BEFORE THE STRENGTH OF *THOR!*

NOT SO LONG AS MINE *ARMS* DOTH POSSESS SHEER *STRENGTH* ENOW TO KEEP THY JAWS SPREAD *WIDE!*

BUT, VERILY, EVEN *MY* STRENGTH MAY NOT PROVE TO BE *ENOUGH* IN THE END!

THE BEHEMOTH DOTH NOT *FALTER*, DOTH NOT *PAUSE* IN ITS MERCILESS *ATTACK!*

IN TRUTH, IT MAY YET *DEVOUR* ME, UNLESS I TAKE THE *INITIATIVE*--

--AND *STRIKE!!*

BROK!

FALL, THOU LOATHESOME CREATURE! NAUGHT THAT LIVES CAN LONG STAND AGAINST THE ENCHANTED MALLET *MJOLNIR!*

FALL, I SAY THEE! THOU ART *MIGHTY* INDEED-- BUT *I* AM MIGHTIER *STILL!*

FALL, BEHEMOTH! *FALL! FALL!! FALL!!!*

And yea, verily, did the monstrous serpent GUARDIAN at last SUCCUMB to the Thunder God's ONSLAUGHT...

...And it did HEAVE its final convulsive heave in somber SILENCE, as it had battled...

...No manner of SOUND escaping it great bloody lips, no sibilant HISS, no mournful SIGH...

Nay, nob even its own remorseless DEATH-RATTLE!

AT LAST...'TIS OVER.

THERE DOTH BE NO POWER THAT CAN E'ER AWAKEN YON BEHEMOTH FROM THIS FINAL SLEEP.

NOW THERE IS NAUGHT THAT STANDS 'TWIXT ME AND MY GOAL!

A MOMENT LONGER--AND THE CRYSTAL OF BLOOD SHALL BE...

MINE, THUNDER GOD!

THE CRYSTAL OF BLOOD IS NOW MINE!!

THINE, LOKI? NAY, THE MYSTIC GEMSTONE SHALL NOW BELONG TO OUR MOST NOBLE FATHER!

BY HELA, THY NAIVETE DOTH ASTONISH ME!

FOR TIME BEYOND RECKONING HAVE I AWAITED THIS MOMENT, FOOL--WHEN I MIGHT POSSESS THE KEY TO MY ULTIMATE VICTORY!

AND NOW THAT IT BE MINE, NOTHING SHALL WREST IT FROM ME!!

I...I DO NOT UNDERSTAND! WHAT IS IT THOU DOST WANT, LOKI?

I'D HAVE THOUGHT THE ANSWER TO THAT QUITE OBVIOUS, DEAR BROTHER!

I WANT... REVENGE!!

REVENGE FOR ALL THE INDIGNITIES I HAVE SUFFERED IN THY SHADOW!

WITH THE BLOOD CRYSTAL, I CAN EASILY GAIN THAT REVENGE, THOR--

"DOST THOU RECALL ODIN'S FAITHFUL MANSERVANT DRUVAK?"

DRUVAK, FETCH ME MY ROYAL SCEPTRE.

IMMEDIATELY, OMNIPOTENT ONE.

I NEED ONLY CONCENTRATE FOR A MOMENT--

"...AND THOU SHALT RECALL HIM NO LONGER!"

I THANK THEE, MY GOOD AND FAITHFUL...

--BUT MAYHAP I SHOULD SHOW THEE HOW!

--PROJECT MINE ALL-CONSUMING HATRED FROM THIS CAVERN TO UNSUSPECTING ASGARD...

EH?

HOW ***ODD***. FOR A MOMENT, I THOUGHT THERE WAS SOMEONE ***ELSE*** IN...

BUT ***NAY***, METHINKS 'TWAS MERELY THE MIND OF A MUCH-CONCERNED MONARCH ***WANDERING*** A BIT.

ALREADY THE NON-EXISTENT DRUVAK IS ***FOR-GOTTEN***...

...BY ALL SAVE ***ME!***

JUST AS ***THOU*** SHALT BE FOR-GOTTEN, THUNDER GOD-- WHEN ***NEXT*** MY BLOOD CRYSTAL DOTH ***STRIKE!***

THEN SHALL ***LOKI*** BE ODIN'S ***FAVORITE*** SON--ODIN'S ***ONLY*** SON--AND NEXT IN LINE TO ***INHERIT*** THE GOLDEN ***THRONE!***

SO THAT I MAY COME THAT MUCH ***CLOSER*** TO ATTAINING THE ***SOVEREIGNTY***--

--'TIS TIME FOR THEE TO ***DIE!!***

LOKI, THOU HAST TAKEN LEAVE OF THY ***SENSES!***

OF WHAT ULTI-MATE ***VALUE*** TO THEE WOULD BE A THRONE THOU WOULDST WIN THROUGH SUCH IGNOBLE ***TREACHERY***?

FOOL, WHAT MATTERS ***NOBILITY*** TO THE IMPATIENT ***GOD OF MISCHIEF***?

TREACHERY IS MY ***BIRTHRIGHT***-- AS INCOMPARABLE ***STRENGTH*** IS THINE!

AYE, EVER HATH ODIN FAVORED ***THEE***--MERELY BECAUSE THE ACCIDENT OF ***BIRTH*** DID MAKE THEE HIS ***NATURAL*** SON!

NEVER HATH ODIN NOTICED ***MINE*** ACCOMPLISHMENTS, ***MY*** MERITS--!

FOR FAR TOO LONG HATH ODIN BEEN ***BLINDED*** TO THE WORTHI-NESS OF ***LOKI*** BY THE CURSED GLOWING ***HALO*** THAT DOTH SEEM TO SURROUND ***THEE!***

WELL, A MOMENT ***LONGER*** AND ALL THAT SHALL ***CHANGE!*** A MOMENT LONGER AND ***LOKI*** SHALL BE...

SLAIN, LITTLE ONE -- FOR THE GREATER GLORY OF ZEUS!!

KWHAM!

BY ODIN! ONE OF THE TITANS DOTH YET LIVE!!

BUT HOW?!?

UUNHH!!

WHEN THE SERPENT-BEAST STRUCK, I WAS HURLED INTO THE WATER-- WHERE I DID FLOAT IN A DAZE...

...UNTIL NOW!!

THE CRYSTAL OF BLOOD IS ONCE MORE MINE TO PROTECT!

BUT FIRST I SHALL USE ITS AWESOME POWER TO DESTROY THEE BOTH LIKE...

ENOUGH OF THIS UNHOLY MADNESS, TITAN!

LET THERE BE AN END TO IT-- NOW!!

THRAK! SPRAK!

Hurled without MERCY, the mighty weapon called MJOLNIR THE DESTROYER struck savagely, SHATTERING the arcane blood crystal and laying the Titan LOW...

Thus, the REASON for its very EXISTENCE in glittering RUINS, the cavern carved to CONTAIN the blood crystal did suddenly begin to TREMBLE, to SHAKE...

...And, at last, to TEAR ITSELF APART!!

BY SURTUR'S RAGING FLAMES! THIS CAVERN DOTH COLLAPSE ABOUT ME!

IN MERE MOMENTS, IT SHALL BECOME A TERRIBLE TOMB FROM WHICH THERE CAN BE NO ESCAPE!

LOKI AND I MUST FLEE ERE IT DOTH BE TOO LATE!!

And, heedless of his own SAFETY, the noble God of Thunder did PULL his battered brother from beneath the falling RUBBLE...

...To SALVATION!

I SEEK TO DESTROY THEE, AND YET THOU DOST SAVE MY LIFE?

TRULY, THOU ART A FAR GREATER FOOL THAN I HAD IMAGINED!

NAY, LOKI, THOUGH I MAY CURSE THE FATES THAT MADE IT SO...

...I AM THY BROTHER.

AND WE ARE BOTH OF US...OMNIPOTENT ODIN'S SONS!

The journey BACK to immortal Asgard is passed with a solemn SILENCE, which speaks far MORE than mere WORDS ever could--

--And when, at last, the sons of Odin did stand before their fabled FATHER once more...

...AND THAT IS ALL THERE IS LEFT TO *SAY*, MOST HIGH.

THE BLOOD CRYSTAL WAS *DESTROYED* IN OUR BATTLE WITH THE *TITANS*, AND THE CAVERN THAT HAD HELD IT *SEALED* FOREVER!

FORGIVE US, OMNIPOTENT ONE... FOR WE HAVE *FAILED* THEE.

NAY, THOR--THOU DIDST NOT *FAIL* ME.

BUT WE RETURNED WITHOUT THE *BLOOD CRYSTAL*, SIRE.

THAT ENCHANTED GEMSTONE WAS FAR TOO *POWERFUL* TO REMAIN IN *EXISTENCE*, THUNDER GOD.

I WOULD HAVE DESTROYED IT *MYSELF* HADST THOU BROUGHT IT TO ME!

AYE, THOU DIDST *WELL*... MY GOOD AND FAITHFUL *SONS*.

THOU ART FREE TO DEPART THE *PRESENCE*.

NAY, THOR--NOT *THEE*. I BID THEE *REMAIN*.

I WOULD HAVE A *WORD* WITH THEE, THUNDER GOD.

I AM EVER AT THY *SERVICE*, MILORD.

THEN *TELL* ME, MY SON... HOW DIDST THY BROTHER *LOKI* FARE ON THY PERILOUS QUEST?

HE... HE WAS... HE WAS EVERY INCH AN *ASGARDIAN*, FATHER, TRUE TO HIS NOBLE *HERITAGE*.

THOU WOULDST HAVE BEEN... *PROUD* OF HIM.

THAT IS THY FINAL *WORD* ON THE MATTER, MY SON?

AYE... MY FATHER.

THEN THOU HAST FILLED MINE *HEART* TO OVER-FLOWING, THUNDER GOD--

--FOR THOU HAST SPOKEN AS EVER I *KNEW* THOU WOULDST SPEAK!

EVEN AS I KNOW THY WORDS TOUCH ONLY THY *LIPS*, AND NOT THY *HEART*.

WHAT? BUT, SIRE, I...

SILENCE, THOR! 'TIS MY TURN TO SPEAK!

THOUGH ODIN IS *SUPREME* AMONG ALL THE GODS, TRULY HAVE THERE BEEN OTHER GODS SUPREME *BEFORE* ME--

--AS THERE SHALL BE THOSE SUPREME WHO DOTH *FOLLOW* ME!

SOMEDAY, MY SON, WHEN *VAL-HALLA* HATH AT LAST *CLAIMED* ME, EITHER THEE OR THY BROTHER SHALL SIT THE GOLDEN THRONE IN MY *STEAD!*

THAT IS *WHY* I SENT THEE BOTH IN QUEST OF THE *BLOOD CRYSTAL!*

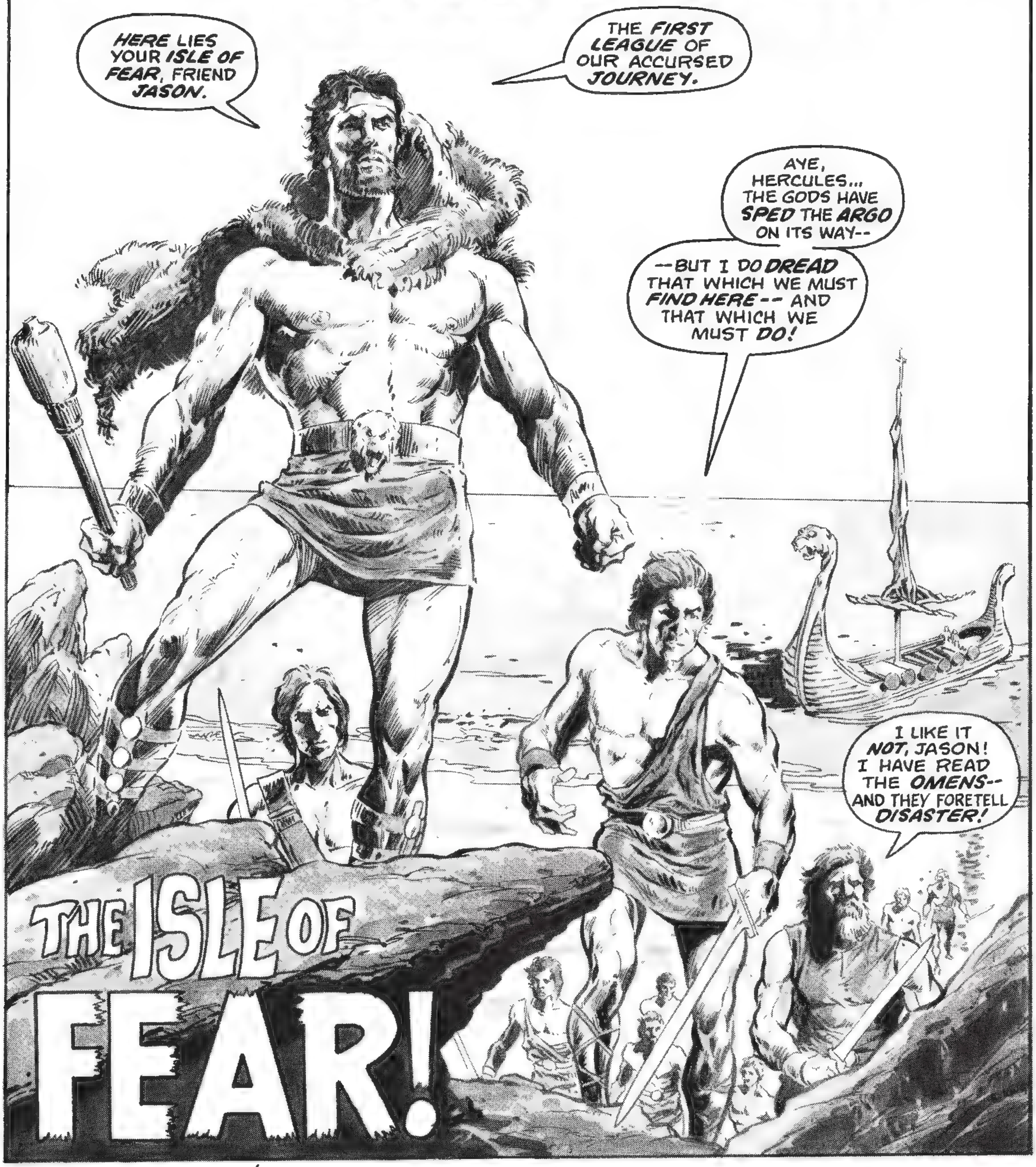
SO THAT I MIGHT BEST DETERMINE *WHICH* OF THEE BE MOST *WORTHY* TO RULE O'ER THE *REALM ETERNAL!*

AND NOW, AT LAST, MOST NOBLE THUNDER GOD...

...I *KNOW* THE FATEFUL *ANSWER!*

FIN

HERCULES
THE PRINCE OF POWER


HERE LIES YOUR ISLE OF FEAR, FRIEND JASON.
THE FIRST LEAGUE OF OUR ACCURSED JOURNEY.
AYE, HERCULES... THE GODS HAVE SPED THE ARGO ON ITS WAY--
--BUT I DO DREAD THAT WHICH WE MUST FIND HERE -- AND THAT WHICH WE MUST DO!
I LIKE IT NOT, JASON! I HAVE READ THE OMENS-- AND THEY FORETELL DISASTER!
THE ISLE OF FEAR!

Story: BILL MANTLO / Art: VAL MAYERIK

I, TOO, HAVE READ THE OMENS, AEGISTHUS--

--AND TO ME THEY SPOKE ONLY OF A FOWL WHO REGRETTED HAVING HER GUTS SPILLED ALL OVER A COLD DECK!

MOCK NOT THE MEN, HERCULES!

IF THEY SPEAK OF THEIR FEAR--

--IT WILL NOT OVERRULE THEIR REASON WHEN COMES THE TIME TO FIGHT!

PERHAPS, LAD-- BUT 'TWILL NOT BE REASON WE'LL NEED THEN--

--BUT GOOD MEN-- WITH SWORD AND SPEAR AT THE READY!

"OR HAVE YOU SO SOON FORGOTTEN PYLOS, LAD, THE STINK OF BLOOD ON THE HOT SAND OF THE ARENA--

"--THE BREATH FAIRLY REELING YOU BACK AS THE THRICE ACCURSED CROWD BELLOWED FOR MORE--

"--AND THAT MISBEGOTTEN FLEA BAG OF A DESPOT KING--"

KREON!

I GROW WEARY, OF THE WAITING! WHERE IS THIS SPORT YOU PROMISED, O KING?

IT WILL COME, HERCULES --SOON!

I HAVE BUT TO SIGNAL MY MASTER OF THE GAMES!

THEN SIGNAL AND BE DONE!

HAVE A CARE, OLYMPIAN! YOU SPEAK TO THE KING OF PYLOS!

EH, CAPTAIN! IT WOULD *PLEASE US* GREATLY IF YOU WOULD CHECK ON THE-- EH-- *PROGRESS* OF THE PREPARATIONS!

AND SEE TO IT THAT THE *GUARD* WHO DARED INSULT OUR GUEST IS *DRAWN AND QUARTERED!*

WE CANNOT AFFORD TO HAVE THE *SON OF ZEUS* ANGERED AT US!

IT SHALL BE AS YOU *SAY*, SIRE!

GODS, BUT I DO GROW *BLISTERS*, KREON!

BUT, *WAIT* THE *FAR-GATE* DOTH *OPEN!*

THE TRUMPETS *SOUND--*

--THE GAMES DO BEGIN!!

THERE IS A ROAR FROM THE WINE-SOAKED CROWD. IN THE GATE-WAY STANDS JASON --THE CAPTAIN OF ARGO...

... BUT THEN A HUSH SWALLOWS THE ANTICIPATION OF THE GAMES TO COME...

*... AND THE PEOPLE OF THE PORT-CITY OF PYLOS **STARE.***

*FOR, **BESIDE** JASON STANDS A LITHE AND YOUTHFUL FORM, HER GOLDEN HAIR **LIFTING** SLIGHTLY IN THE BREEZE.*

*ALCESTE, THE **DAUGHTER** OF THE KING OF PYLOS.*

*NO! **BY ALL THE GODS THERE BE --***

--NO!!

THE GODS WILL VOUCHSAFE *NOTHING*, KING!

LOOK FOR THE WOMAN'S *SAFETY* NOW--

--ON THE HORNS OF THE BULL!"

*ITS EYES ARE **RED**. IT HAS BEEN PRODDED AND **STARVED** FOR A RITUAL **THREE DAYS**, AND GIVEN ONLY **VINEGAR** TO SLAKE ITS **THIRST***

*BEING A BRUTE, IT CANNOT DISTINGUISH **WHICH** OF THE HUMAN-CREATURES HAS CAUSED ITS **PAIN**...*

*...SO IT IS LEFT NO **CHOICE** BUT TO VENT ITS **RAGE**...*

*...ON THOSE WHO STAND **BEFORE IT!***

REMEMBER WHAT I ***TAUGHT YOU***, ALCESTE! DEATH RIDES THE ***HORNS!***

WATCH ***ONLY*** THE HORNS--AND WE WILL ***WIN CLEAR!***

I--I WILL ***TRY*** TO REMEMBER, JASON!

FOR ***YOU*** I WILL TRY!

*THE BULL **SNORTS**, PAWS SAND. IT IS **CONFUSED** BY THE GLARE AND THE ROAR OF **VOICES** ON ALL SIDES!*

*...BUT SO **IRRITATED** IS IT, THAT THE SLIGHTEST **MOVEMENT** WILL TURN ITS CONFUSION...*

THE ***WOMAN!*** THE KING WILL HAVE OUR ***HEADS*** IF HIS DAUGHTER ***DIES!***

...INTO ACTION!

NO! I MUST WATCH THE ***HORNS!*** YOU DON'T ***UNDERSTAND--***

--IT ***CHARGES US!***

YOU LITTLE ***FOOL!***

ALCESTE!

THE HORNS!!

PERHAPS THE GUARD THINKS HIMSELF ATTACKED BY JASON'S CRY. PERHAPS HE, TOO, IS CONFUSED BY THE VOICES.

WHATEVER, HE RELEASES THE KING'S DAUGHTER IN ORDER TO DRAW HIS SWORD.

HE REALIZES HIS ERROR TOO LATE!

YEEAGGHH!

J-JASON...?

DOWN WOMAN--

DOWN!!

ARE YOU ALRIGHT?

MY ANKLE JASON!

IT'S TWISTED! I CANNOT RUN!

BUT... YOU MUST! BY ALL THE GODS--

--YOU MUST!

AND BLOOD, THE BRUTE HAS DECIDED-- IS BETTER THAN VINEGAR.

WATCH THE HORNS JASON HAD SAID.

THEY HAVE NO CHOICE...

...FOR THERE'S NOTHING BUT SAND BETWEEN.

ALCESTE, I --

YOU WOULD DO WELL TO LEARN NOT TO INDULGE THE DAUGHTERS OF KINGS, LAD!

YOU'VE PLACED US ALL ON THE HORNS!

HERCULES!

AYE, JASON--

--HERCULES! SON OF ZEUS ALMIGHTY!

BORN OF HIS LOVE FOR MY MORTAL MOTHER --ALCMENA!

I WHO WAS RAISED AMONG LIONS--HIDDEN FROM HERA'S RAGE!

I WHOSE LABOUR'S CAUSED A WORLD TO STAND IN WONDER-MENT--

--WHOSE STRENGTH CAUSED FEAR EVEN AMONGST THE GODS!

AYE, LAD! HERCULES!!

KRRAA·

THE PRINCE OF POWER!!

AAGH!

AND ALL IN THE NAME OF GLORY, LAD!

ALL FOR GLORY!!

BUT THERE ARE SOME WHO DON'T SEE IT QUITE THAT WAY.

DEATH!

BRING ME JASON'S SKIN --OR BY THE GODS, I'LL FLAY YOU ALL!

YOU ENDANGER THE KING'S DAUGHTER --AND YET YOU ASK?

YOU ARE A FOOL, JASON!

HE IS A DEAD FOOL, CAPTAIN!

WHAT HAVE I DONE?

FATHER, NO!

SILENCE, DAUGHTER! IS IT NOT ENOUGH THAT I HAVE BEEN SHAMED BEFORE MY PEOPLE?

BLAME NOT ALCESTE SIRE. I--

HOLD YOUR TONGUE, DOOMED ONE!

BUT, FATHER-- I ASKED JASON TO TEACH ME THE ART OF THE BULL-LEAPERS!

THEN IT IS YOU WHO HAVE DOOMED HIM, MY DAUGHTER!

BUT--BUT DOESN'T IT MATTER--

--THAT I LOVE HIM?

FORTUNATELY, NO! IT IS I WHO WILL DECIDE WHOM YOU MAY OR MAY NOT LOVE! I--

PEACE, KING OF PYLOS! I CRAVE A BOON--

--AS IS MY RIGHT FOR SLAYING THE CEREMONIAL BULL!

YES, THAT IS SO!

THEN LET IT BE THIS BOY'S LIFE! TAKING IT WILL GAIN YOU NOTHING--

--AND I WILL SEE TO IT THAT HE LEAVES PYLOS, NOT TO RETURN UNTIL HE HAS DONE PROPER PENANCE FOR AFFRONTING YOU.

BETTER YET, HERCULES --NEVER TO RETURN UNLESS HE CAN BRING ME THE GOLD OF THE GORGON--

--FROM THE SHORES OF THE ISLE OF FEAR!

OH, JASON...

WELL, LAD? DOES NOT THAT SAND GRATE ON YOUR KNEES!

WE HAVE A TASK TO TEND TO!

BUT THE *ISLE OF FEAR*, HERCULES--

IS AN *ISLAND* LIKE ANY *OTHER*, LAD--

-- AND ONCE WE'VE A *SHIP AND CREW*--

"-- THE GORGON'S GOLD WILL BE OURS FOR THE TAKING!!"

GODS, BUT I'D *SWEAR* A WIND HAS WHIPPED UP JUST TO *PLAGUE US!*

OMENS, HERCULES? I THOUGHT *BETTER* OF YOU!

SO! EVEN A *GODLING* CAN FEAR AN *EVIL WIND*--

--AND WISH HE STOOD A *QUIETER BERTH* BACK ON THE STREETS OF *PYLOS!*

HAVE A *CARE*, AEGISTHUS! BECAUSE I LIKE NOT THE *CHILL* IN THE AIR--

--IS NO CAUSE TO CAST CLAIMS OF *WITCHERY* AGAINST ME!

HERCULES? IN ALL *GAIA* OR *OLYMPUS*--

--IS THERE ANY *TALE* TOLD OF LIONS THAT *FLY?*

ONLY WHEN HEPHAESTUS HAS TAKEN TOO MUCH *NECTAR*, LAD! WHY?

I JUST WISHED TO *KNOW* BEFORE I ABANDONED *REASON*, AND CRIED--

"GRIFFIN!"

RRRRR...

--ROWRRR!

BY THE SILVER BOW OF APOLLO--

--YOU HAVE SPEARS DON'T YOU?

CAST THEM!!

THEY OBEY, THESE MEN OF THE ARGO...

FOR A MOMENT, THE PRINCE OF POWER IS TOO STUNNED TO REACT...

IT FALLS UPON THE MEN!

DEVOURS THEM!!

...BUT OF WHAT USE ARE SPEARS...

TCHAK

SKRAK

...AGAINST A HIDE AS STRONG AS STEEL?

...BUT THEN THE SCREAMS OF THE VICTIMS REACH HIS EARS.

HERE, AEGISTHUS!

BY MY FATHER'S BEARD-- HERCULES IS HERE!!

BUT EVEN THE INTERVENTION OF A DEMI-GOD SEEMS NOT ENOUGH TO STOP THE SLAVERING RAMPAGE OF THE MYSTIC BEAST.

RRRRRR

HERCULES! THE BEAST TAKES FLIGHT.

I--I CANNOT! IT RISES TOO HIGH!

THEN SECURE YOUR HOLD, LAD! GRIP TIGHT THE MAD BEAST'S MANE!

FOR IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO COME TO THE PRINCE OF POWER--

LEAP CLEAR, LAD! LEAP CLEAR!

THEN 'TIS *HERCULES* WHO MUST COME *TO YOU!*

*UNABLE TO CLIMB UP **HIGHER** ON THE CREATURE FOR FEAR OF BEING **DROPPED**, HERCULES' MIND **DRIFTS** BACK DAYS EARLIER...*

SO, LAD, D'YE THINK THE GOLDEN-HAIRED *WENCH* WAS WORTH THE *TROUBLE* WE'VE BEEN *PUT TO?*

IT WASN'T HER *HAIR* THAT INTERESTED ME, HERCULES! SHE HAD *OTHER--*

--MORE ENDEARING QUALITIES!

QUALITIES SHE SHARES WITH THE *REST* OF HER SEX, JASON!

BY THE GODS! THE WOMAN *MUST* LOVE ME!

OH, SHE GAVE ME *THIS RING* TO GIVE YOU ERE WE *DEPARTED!*

THAT STONE IS WORTH AT LEAST A *SHIP* AND *CREW!*

WHICH IS WHAT IT WILL *BUY*, CAPTAIN! THE *ARGO* HAS BEEN *ROTTING* ON THE DOCKS SINCE OUR *LAST* VOYAGE--

--AND HER CREW HAS GROWN SO USED TO *LANDED* WAYS--

--THAT WE SHALL HAVE TO *PUMP* THE *SALT* BACK INTO THEM!

SPEAK I NOT THE *TRUTH* OLD ONE?

IS IT TRULY *THOU*, MILORD? DO WE *SAIL* AGAIN?

AYE, OLD ONE! WE *SAIL!*

WHERE HAVE THE *DOCK-BILGE* OF PYLOS ALLOWED THE ARGO TO *ANCHOR?*

THERE, MY PRINCE! AMIDST THE GARBAGE OF THE *MERCHANT SCOWS!*

THEN WE MUST CLEAN THE *CABBAGE STINK* FROM OUT HER *SAILS*, OLD MAN--

--BY *UNFURLING THEM* AND TURNING THEM INTO THE *WIND!*

TIMON! ORESTUS!

AYE, MY PRINCE?

WE *SAIL*, ORESTUS-- WITH THE FIRST *TIDE!* YOUR *CAPTAIN* HAS MADE HIMSELF... *UNWELCOME* AMONGST THE GENTRY OF PYLOS, AND--

JASON? UNWELCOME? THERE WAS A *WENCH* NO DOUBT!

TELL US, HERCULES! DID SHE HAVE *HAIR* THE COLOR OF THAT *FLEECE* HE HAD US *WIN* FOR HIM?

THAT SHE *DID*, CRATES! THOUGH METHINKS I DID DETECT TRACES OF *DYE* AMONGST THE *GOLD!*

HE *LIES*, SAILORS -- BUT NO MATTER! HER *JEWELRY* IS MORE THAN ADEQUATE TO MAKE UP FOR ANY *VANITY* SHE MAY AFFECT--

--AND IT HAS BROUGHT OUR *RELEASE* FROM THESE WRETCHED *DOCKS!*

WHITHER ARE WE *BOUND*, CAPTAIN?

FOR *TREASURE*, LADS -- ENOUGH TO SOFTEN A HARD KING'S *HEART!*

AND ENOUGH TO WIN A *PRINCESS*-- DYED OR *PURE!*

WE'RE BOUND FOR *GLORY*, MY LADS--

--FOR THE *ISLE OF FEAR!!*

MAY ZEUS *PRESERVE* US!

MAY ZEUS INDEED... FOR THESE STOUT MEN HAVE GREAT NEED OF SUCH DIVINE PRE-SERVATION NOW.

SAILORS! WHY RETURN YOU IN SUCH HASTE?

AND WHERE ARE OUR CAPTAINS-- HERCULES AND JASON?

GONE TO HADES ON THE BACK OF A WINGED DEMON OLD MAN!

LOOSE THE SAILS --OR WE MAY YET BE NEXT WHEN THE GRIFFIN HUNTS!

GRIFFIN? ARE YE MAD, WARRIOR?

YE HAVE DESERTED THY CAPTAIN AND THY PRINCE-- AND YE SPEAK TO ME OF FABLES AND MONSTERS? WARRIOR, I NAME YE LIAR!

DO YOU, OLD MAN? CANST THOU LOOK AT THAT WHICH ARISES FROM THE WAVES--

--AND STILL DOUBT THE WORDS OF THEY WHO HAVE SEEN!!

BY THE TRIDENT OF POSEIDON!

THE BEHEMOTH RISES, BRINGING WITH IT THE STENCH OF UNTOLD DEPTHS OF THE SEA.

ARE YE *MEN*, ARGONAUTS--

--OR *BOYS* THAT YE WOULD *RUN* FROM A CREATURE OF SALT AND *SLIME*?

MUST AN *OLD MAN* NOTCH ARROW TO *BOW* AND TEACH YE THE WAY OF *WARRIORS*?!

TWANG

YEEAHHH

SPRAAAAAH

THE SHIP! *IT RAMS THE SHIP!!*

BY HERA! MY SHAFT HAS ONLY *MADDENED* THE BEAST!

AND NOW WE MUST FIGHT --LIKE *MINNOWS* TRYING TO BRING DOWN A *SHARK*!

MAY APHRODITE WATCH *OVER US*--

--FOR THIS DAY WE--

--DIE BEAST!

WHY DON'T YOU DIE!?

IT WILL, LAD! YOUR SWORD HAS FOUND ITS HEART!

THE GRIFFIN FALLS!

AYE, SON OF ZEUS--

--BUT SO DO WE!!

TRUE ENOUGH LAD--BUT WITH THAT MOUNTAIN OF FLESH TO CUSHION YOU--

--I SHOULD WORRY LESS ABOUT THE FALL THEN WHERE THE BEAST HAS BROUGHT US!

WHARUMP!

'TIS PLAIN THE GRIFFIN WAS A CREATION OF THE GORGON, HERCULES!

GODS, WHAT MADNESS! I DO BEGIN TO WONDER IF ALCESTE IS TRULY WORTH IT!

OF COURSE SHE ISN'T, LAD! WHAT WOMAN IS? BUT COME--

--THE QUEST AWAITS US STILL, AND IN THE FULFILLMENT OF IT WILL WE FIND THAT WHICH IS PRECIOUS ABOVE ALL ELSE!

GLORY!!

A PATH, HERCULES! CUT FROM LIVING STONE--LEADING UPWARDS TO A TEMPLE--

--AND FLANKED BY THE STATUES OF GREEK WARRIORS! SCULPTED AS IF AT ANY MOMENT THEY WOULD LEAP FORTH AND FIGHT AGAIN!

NOT SCULPTED, FRIEND JASON! TRANSFORMED!

HAVE YOU SO SOON FORGOTTEN THE TALES OF THE GORGON MEDUSA? HOW HER GAZE--

--MAY TURN MEN TO *STONE*, HERCULES?

DO MEN STILL *TELL THE OLD TALES*? I HAD THOUGHT THEY WOULD HAVE GONE ON TO *NEWER* THINGS!

MEDUSA!!

IS IT *SHE*, HERCULES?

IS IT REALLY SHE?

DOES THE BOY *DOUBT ME*, OLYMPIAN? LET HIM COME *FORTH* AND SEE FOR *HIMSELF!*

STAND THY *GROUND*, LAD! *HEED HER NOT!*

YOU ARE *SELFISH*, HERCULES! THE BOY SENSES *LIFE* WITHIN ME! LIFE *ETERNAL!*

YOU ALREADY *POSSESS* IMMORTALITY, MAN-GOD--

--LET *HIM* NOW HAVE *HIS CHANCE!*

HER *VOICE* SO ...*BEAUTIFUL*...

JASON!!

HUSH, MAN-GOD! THE BOY HAS BUT TO *TASTE* OF THE *GOLDEN APPLES*--

--AND HE WILL BE AS *AGELESS* AS ARE *WE!*

SEE HOW *HUNGRILY* HE *REACHES* OUT FOR IT?

WITCH!

IT IS NOT *LIFE* HE REACHES OUT FOR--

--BUT *DEATH* EVER-LASTING!

MY COWL--!!

YET *MEDUSA* DID NOT *LIE!* HE *WILL LIVE* FOREVER!

--*IMMORTALIZED* IN *STONE!*

YOU ARE *RIGHT,* OLYMPIAN! IT WAS *DEATH* HE *SOUGHT* AFTER--

--AND IT IS *DEATH* HE HAS *FOUND!*

AND YOU ARE *NEXT,* MAN-GOD--!

NO WITCH--

--FOR I HAVE KEPT MY EYES TIGHT *SHUT* SINCE MY MACE THREW BACK THY *COWL!*

SPLOOSH!

AND AS LONG AS *MY EYES* DO NOT MEET *YOURS*-- HERCULES WILL *ESCAPE* THE FATE THOU HAST WROUGHT ON *OTHERS!*

GOOD, MAN-GOD! KEEP SHUT YOUR EYES--

--AND MEDUSA WILL SEEK OUT YOUR THROAT AND OFFER YOU AS SACRIFICE TO YOUR THRICE-ACCURSED FATHER!

BLEAT, HERCULES! BLEAT LIKE THE SHEEP YOU ARE!

BY THE GODS, DEMON! YOU'LL NOT HAVE HERCULES!

THERE YOU ARE WRONG, MAN-GOD!

UUUUKK...

CTHUK!

WHO--??

OLD ONE!!

THE SHIP IS SAVED, CAPTAIN --THOUGH THE CREW IS LOST!

I THANK THEE FOR LETTING ME DIE...

!!!AS A WARRIOR!

THE PRINCE OF POWER LAYS THE OLD WARRIOR'S HEAD TO THE GROUND, AND THE CRIES OF LIFE WELL UP AROUND THEM.

WITH THE GORGON'S DEATH, THOSE TRANSFORMED BY HER GAZE RETURN AT LAST FROM THEIR DREAM OF STONE!

AND AFTER THE OLD MAN HAS BEEN ENTOMBED WITH FULL HONORS...

THE GORGON IS DEAD! THE GOLDEN APPLES OURS!

THE ARGO SURVIVES TO CARRY YOU--HER NEW CREW--BACK TO PYLOS--

--WHILE HERCULES AND I GO ON AHEAD MOUNTED ON THE MEDUSA'S WINGED STEED!

JOIN US IN PYLOS ARGONAUTS--FOR IN THAT CITY WILL WE FIND GLORY!

AND IN PYLOS...

AGAIN I BESEECH THEE FOR THY DAUGHTER'S HAND, LORD KREON!

SURELY THE BRIDE-PRICE I OFFER IS SUFFICIENT!

MORE THAN SUFFICIENT, IONUS! MUCH MORE--

--AND ENOUGH! YOU SHALL HAVE MY DAUGHTER, BY MY COMMAND.

AND THE WEDDING WILL TAKE PLACE--

IN HADES, LIAR KING!

JASON!!

AYE, KREON! THE QUEST IS DONE!

IMPOSS--NO ONE HAS EVER RETURNED FROM THE ISLE OF FEAR!!

THIS IS SOME TRICK OF YOU AND THE OLYMPIAN!

COUNT THE GOLD, THEN, KING--

--SEE THAT IT IS THE GORGON'S AND THEN I'LL CLAIM YOUR DAUGHTER AS MY BRIDE!

GOLD? BUT MEDUSA HAD NO GOLD! ONLY--

--GODS! THE BAG MOVES! SOMETHING STRIKES AT MY HAND!

BY PLUTO! A VIPER!!

IS HE DEAD, JASON?

AS DEAD AS COULD BE WISHED, ALCESTE!

DO YOU HEAR, PEOPLE OF PYLOS? THE KING IS DEAD!!

THE ARGONAUTS HAVE SEEN TO THE GUARDS, JASON! METHINKS THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR FROM KREON'S LACKEY'S!

THOU SPEAKEST TRUTH, HERCULES!

THEN LET IT BE *KNOWN* THAT I, *JASON*, CAPTAIN OF THE *AGRO*--

--DO CLAIM THE *THRONE OF PYLOS* AND THE PAST-KING'S *DAUGHTER* FOR MY OWN!

TYRANNY IS DEAD, CITIZENS!

LONG LIVE JASON! LONG LIVE THE KING!!

AND LONG LIVE *GLORY* LAD! FORGET NOT *THAT!*

HERCULES! WHERE ARE YOU *GOING?*

AWAY, LAD! I'VE NO *PATIENCE* WITH KINGS OR *THRONES*--

--AND I GIVE YOU A *WEEK* BEFORE THE WENCH THROWS YOU OVER FOR *ANOTHER!*

'TIS NOT *MY WAY*, LAD! I PREFER A GOOD *BATTLE*-- MACE IN *HAND*--

--OR A *WOMAN* WHO HAS PROPER *RESPECT* FOR THE FACT THAT I BE THE *SON OF ZEUS!*

FARE THEE *WELL*, JASON! MAYBE OUR PATHS SHALL MEET *AGAIN*--

-- WHEN YOU'VE GIVEN UP HARD *THRONES* FOR THE FEEL OF A *DECK* ONCE MORE BENEATH YOUR *FEET!*

FIN

RUDY D. NEBRES

After plans for a black-and-white *Thor the Mighty* magazine were scrapped in 1975, it was some time before the stories commissioned for the magazine found homes. Steve Englehart and John Buscema's Thor/Hercules adventure saw print in *The Mighty Thor Annual* #5 (1976) while the Wein/Starlin Thor and Mantlo/Mayerik Hercules stories were slated for September 1975's *Marvel Preview* #3 (as seen in this house ad from issue #2, June 1975) before finally seeing print in issue *Marvel Preview* #10 (Winter 1977).

NEXT ISSUE

"WHOSOEVER HOLDS THIS HAMMER, IF HE BE WORTHY, SHALL POSSESS THE POWER OF THOR!"

THE POWER OF THOR . . .
. . . presented as never before, with more power and pageantry than ever dreamed possible. THOR as, perhaps, you've ALWAYS wanted to see him. YOU WILL NEVER FORGET IT! Coming your way in the THIRD senses-shattering, Uru-unleashing issue of . . .

MARVEL PREVIEW
PRESENTS
THOR™

Top: Editorial from *The Mighty Thor* #272, by Roy Thomas
Bottom: *The Mighty Thor* #272 house ad, from May 1978 titles

THE HAMMER STRIKES

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP, 575 MADISON AVE. N.Y.C. 10022

A NORDIC NOTE FROM YE NEW WRITER/EDITOR:

I guess it was bound to happen.

For years now, I've toyed with the idea of scripting the awesome adventures of Thor and his fellow Asgardians. And at last, here I am—again.

For me, as a new editorial flunkie around Marvel circa 1965-66, one of the great thrills was being one of the first people on earth (or elsewhere) to see each vintage tale of Spidey, the F.F., *et al.*, as they came into Marvel's Madison Avenue offices. I was around, admiring, during the final great days of the Lee-Ditko team (even scripting a couple of Sturdy Steve's last Doc Strange stories) and for the beginning of the Lee-Romita collaboration on SPIDER-MAN which, building on what came before, lifted the ol' wall-crawler into first place among the Marvel stars. What a gas it was to see the Inhumans, Galactus, the Silver Surfer, the Black Panther months before anybody else except Fabulous Flo Steinberg, Jolly Solly Brodsky— and of course the writer and artists themselves.

And, in a way— at least for a while— THOR was up there ahead of all of them, for me.

It started, I suppose, with the tail-end of the thunder god's clash with Crusher Creel, the Absorbing Man, back in THOR #123 and thereabouts— with a blackmailing reporter named Harris Hobbs in tow, as the first mortal to visit Asgard. It continued thru the multi-part Thor-Hercules-Pluto slugfest, which is one of the highlights of the Marvel Age of Comics by *any* sane standard, as Stan Lee and Jack Kirby gave new meaning to the word "cosmic." There've been some head-trips since then between Marvel covers, and they've been fun— but for me, THOR #124-129 was *it*!

Nor did the mag taper off unduly after that— what with Tana Nile and the Colonizers from Rigel (sounds like a rock group, huh?), the rhapsodizin' Recorder, the High Evolutionary and his nefarious New-Men, Him (whom I eventually turned into Adam Warlock with a bit of help from Gil Kane)— and, last but far from least, that fateful day when Jane Foster got her one real shot at goddess-hood. . . and blew it.

From that moment on, the mag changed— irreversibly, irretrievably. It didn't necessary get better or worse; it merely. . . changed. The raven-haired Sif entered the strip (replacing both the Norse golden-tressed goddess of that name, and Marvel's own earlier edition of same in a "Tale of Asgard")— new gods like Hogun, Fandral, and Volstagg made the giant leap from "Tales of Asgard" into the main body of the mag— and what I think of as the Second Age of Thor began. In a way, THOR #136 ("To Become an Immortal!") marked a watershed between two eras.

Stan continued to turn out first-rate forays into the unknown, of course— first in connection with "King" Kirby, later with Neal Adams and, most noticeably, Big John Buscema. Interestingly, THOR has had fewer writers than probably any other of the Marvel titles spawned in the 60's— and only two of these, Gerry Conway and lately Len Wein, stuck around long enough to make any imprint on the mag. (My own earlier stint on THOR lasted just one issue of scripting and one issue of plotting; Bill Mantlo and I *together* did only three or so.)

Nor have there been many pencil-artists since the 1964-65 period when Jack Kirby took over the reins again from a host of others. Adams, briefly— then John B.— an issue here and there by his sibling Sal— and most recently and notably, Walt Simonson.

Perhaps it's this small number of writers and artists in the course of nearly 200 issues (ish #282, coming up, is the *real* #200 of the mag, since Thor debuted in JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY #83 back in summer of '62) which has given the book its fairly consistent quality, both in look and in popularity.

For myself, I've long regretted that various circumstances forced me to drop the segment I began (introducing the Egyptian pantheon of gods) in the middle. Fact is, I don't even recall offhand just *why* I left. And I wish I hadn't.

Point being: I'm back, and I plan to stick around a while.

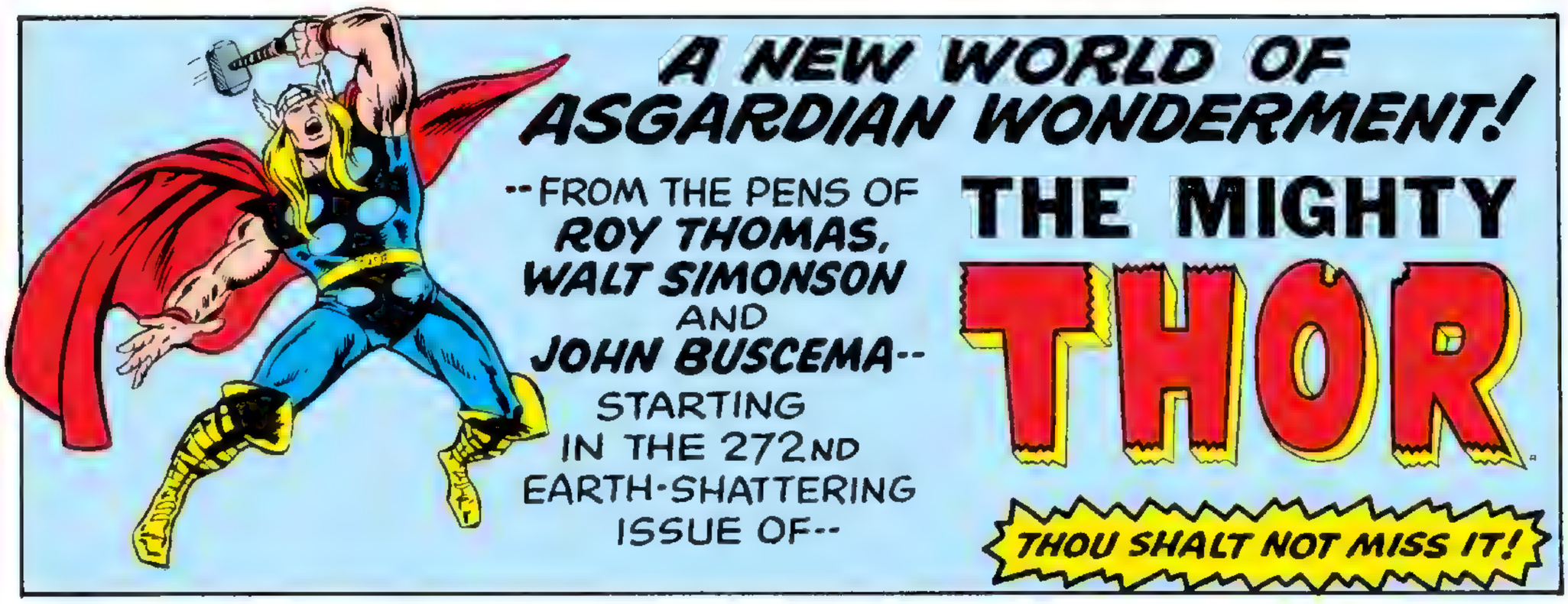
First thing I did when Archie Goodwin asked me to take the writing and editorial chores on THOR was to make certain that, since Wondrous Walt Simonson was going to be busy on our CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND SPECIAL, I could re-unite the team with which I had turned out, I think, some of the more memorable issues of THE AVENGERS, a few years back. Turns out that John B. *volunteered* to pencil the mag, as a change of pace from CONAN and TARZAN— and talented Tom was only too happy to round out our new/old triumvirate. (It was originally intended to be only a two-issue thing, but since then Walt has decided to pursue other artistic directions— save hopefully for this year's THOR ANNUAL and perhaps a special issue now and then— so it looks as if the Thomas/Buscema/Palmer team is back in business!)

As to the mag itself— well, for the most part, we prefer to let you discover our plans for THOR in the pages of the comics themselves, a month at a time. Except for cleaning up a few loose ends of Asgardian dialect here and there (never again, for instance, will Thor say "Thou doth," which is the equivalent of saying "You is"— but that's hardly to fault Len Wein, since who *really* talks like that, anyway?), I prefer the changes in the mag to be more subtle, more gradual.

Suffice it to say that one of my own chief interests for some three decades has been *mythology*. As Odin or somebody used to say: " 'Nuff said."

And now, back to our previously-announced mag!

—Roy Thomas.


A NEW WORLD OF ASGARDIAN WONDERMENT!
--FROM THE PENS OF ROY THOMAS, WALT SIMONSON AND JOHN BUSCEMA--
STARTING IN THE 272ND EARTH-SHATTERING ISSUE OF--
THE MIGHTY THOR
THOU SHALT NOT MISS IT!

House ad promoting Marvel's solo hero titles, including *The Mighty Thor*, from July 1978 titles

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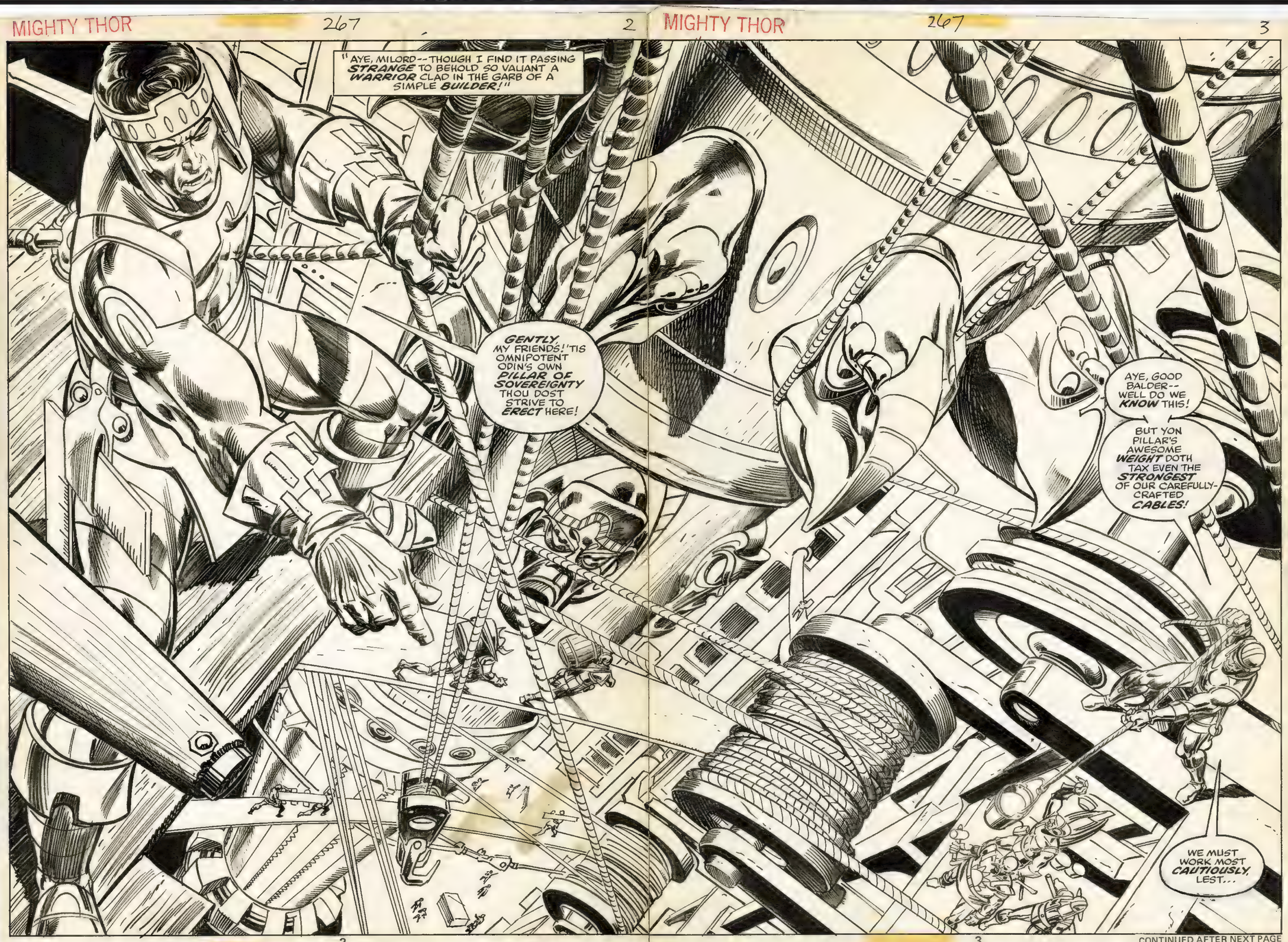
The Mighty Thor #267, pages 2-3 original art by Walter Simonson & Tony DeZuniga


MIGHTY THOR 267 2
"AYE, MILORD--THOUGH I FIND IT PASSING STRANGE TO BEHOLD SO VALIANT A WARRIOR CLAD IN THE GARB OF A SIMPLE BUILDER!"
GENTLY, MY FRIENDS! 'TIS OMNIPOTENT ODIN'S OWN PILLAR OF SOVEREIGNTY THOU DOST STRIVE TO ERECT HERE!
2
MIGHTY THOR 267 3
AYE, GOOD BALDER-- WELL DO WE KNOW THIS!
BUT YON PILLAR'S AWESOME WEIGHT DOTH TAX EVEN THE STRONGEST OF OUR CAREFULLY-CRAFTED CABLES!
WE MUST WORK MOST CAUTIOUSLY, LEST...
3
CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

Courtesy Walter Simonson

The Mighty Thor #270 cover original art
by Walter Simonson & Tony DeZuniga

Courtesy Walter Simonson

The Mighty Thor #270, page 1 original art
by Walter Simonson & Tony DeZuniga

MIGHTY THOR 270 1

When lame Dr. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic mallet MJOLNIR—and Blake is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm and the Lightning, Heir to the Throne of Immortal Asgard...

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!™

LEN WEIN WRITER/EDITOR | WALT SIMONSON & TONY DeZUNIGA ARTISTS / STORYTELLERS | GLYNIS WEIN COLORIST | JOE ROSEN LETTERER

MINUTE of MADNESS... DARK DAY of DOOM!

LAY DOWN AND *DIE*, GOLDEN-HAIR!

YOU DON'T STAND A *CHANCE* AGAINST-- BLASTAAR *THE LIVING BOMB-BURST!!*

WHOOM!

NAY, MONSTROUS ONE! IF I CAN BUT *GRASP* MINE ENCHANTED *HAMMER* ONCE MORE, I CAN...

UUNNHH!!

C-693

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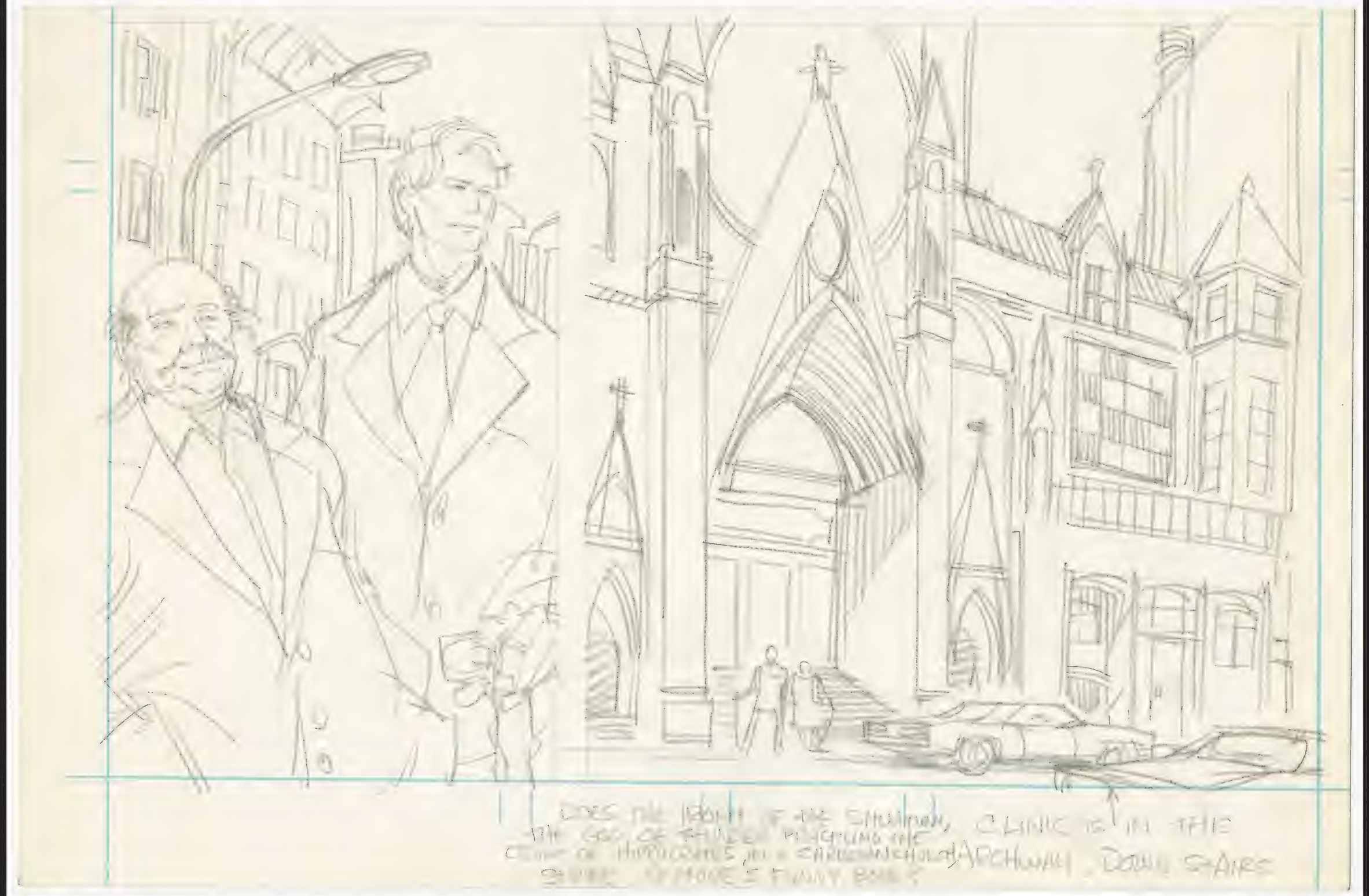
Courtesy Walter Simonson

The Mighty Thor #270, unused pencil art
by Walter Simonson



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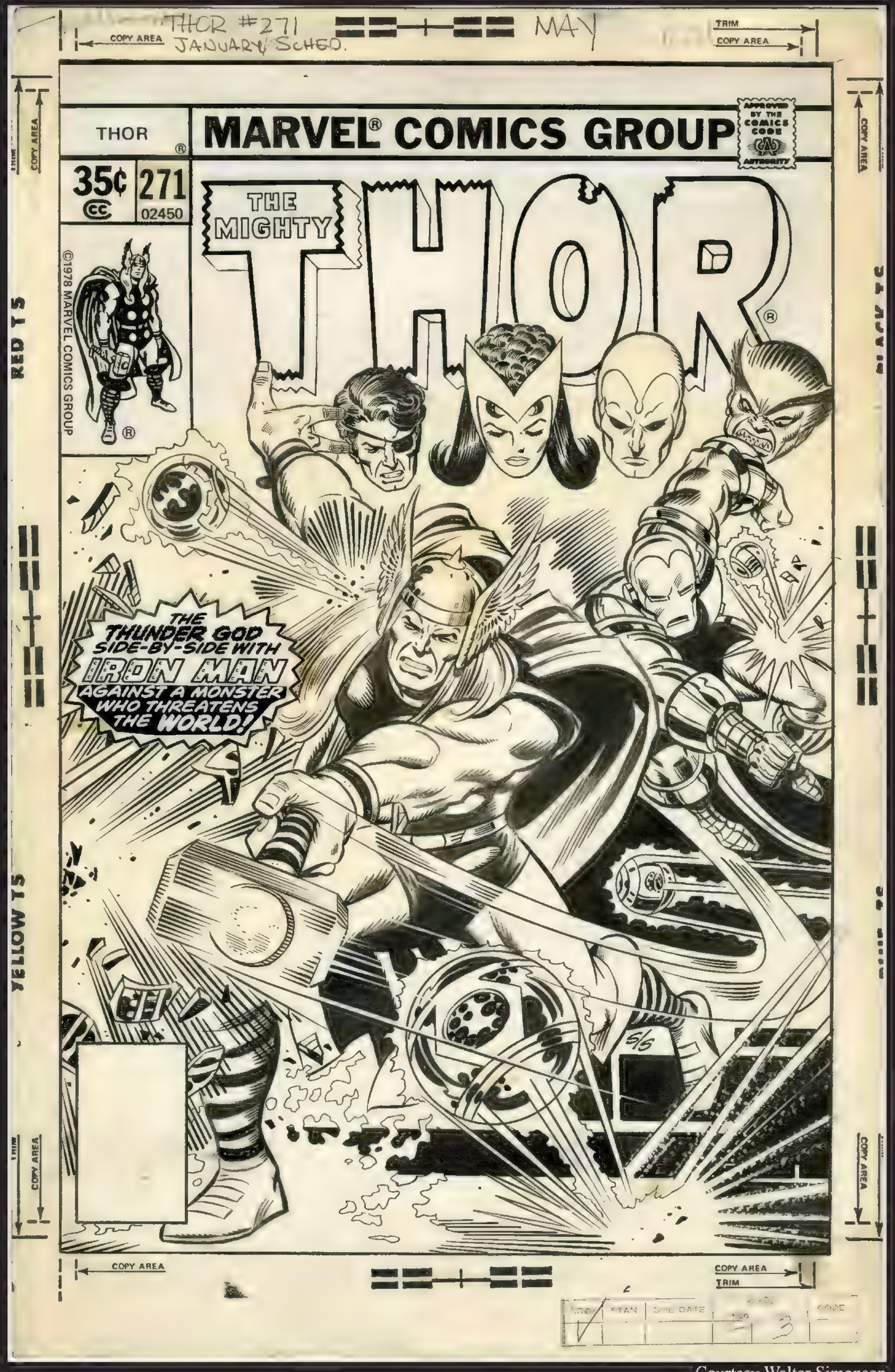
by Walter Simonson & Joe Sinnott



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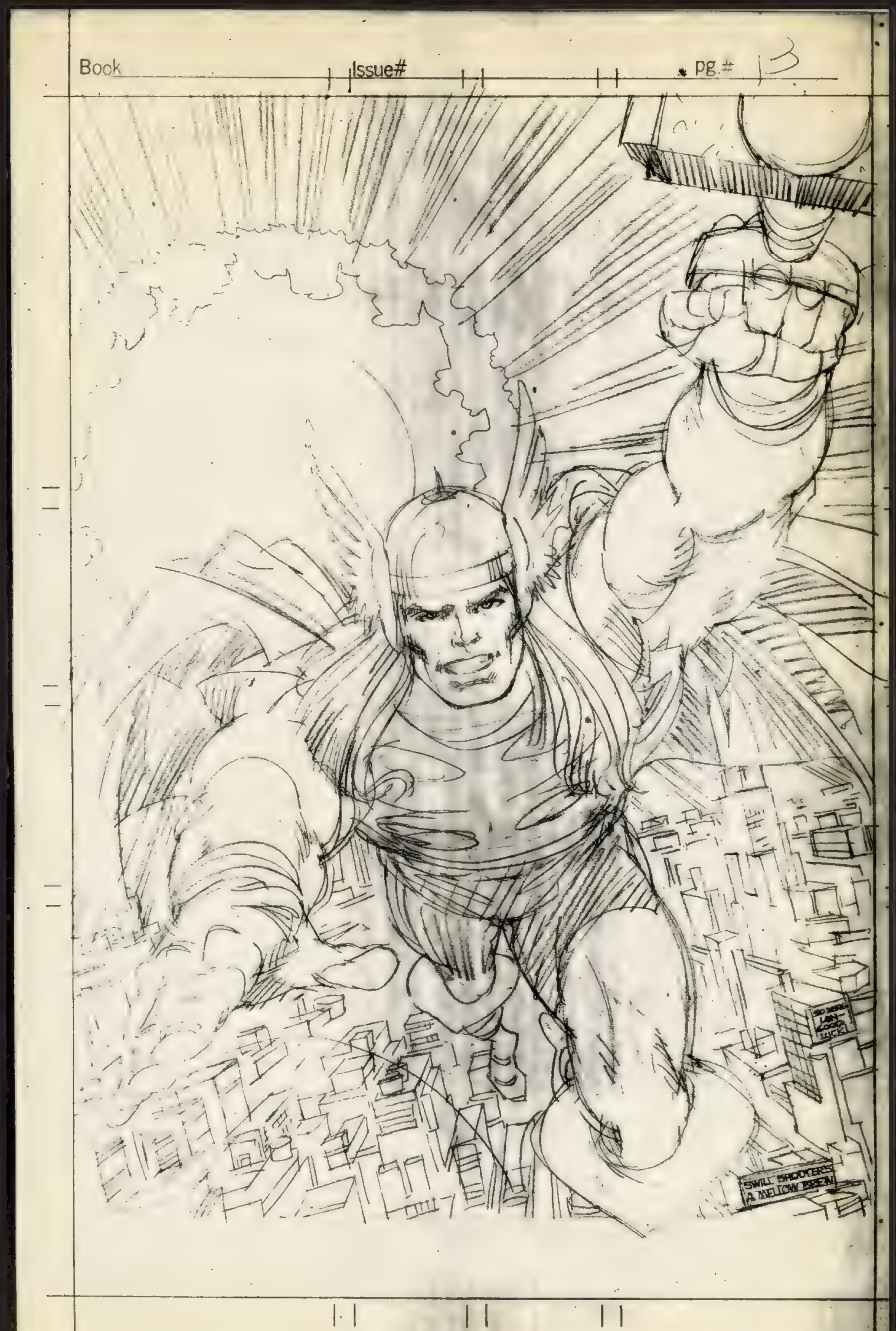
by Walter Simonson



Courtesy Walter Simonson

In the inks for *The Mighty Thor* #271, page 18, Tony DeZuniga shifted Thor's eyes off page to the right (see below); Walter Simonson restored his forward gaze in the final art.

18
Book MIGHTY THOR
Issue# 271
pg # 31
AND WITH THAT, THE GOD OF THUNDER IS GONE FROM THAT MID-MANHATTAN ROOFTOP--THE THONG OF HIS ENCHANTED HAMMER CLENCHED TIGHTLY IN HIS FIST--THE WARM GRIN OF TRIUMPH SPREAD ACROSS HIS CHISELED FEATURES--
--FOR HE HAS FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT ONCE MORE, AND HE HAS BEEN VICTORIOUS--
--AND, FOR THE MOMENT, ALL IS RIGHT WITH HIS WORLD!
NEL'S PLACE
SWILL SHOOTER'S A MELLOW BREW
SO LONG LEN— GOOD LUCK!
NEXT ISSUE:
XEROX
SCAN
DUE DATE
STATS
CODE
CALL ROY FOR BLURB!

Courtesy Walter Simonson

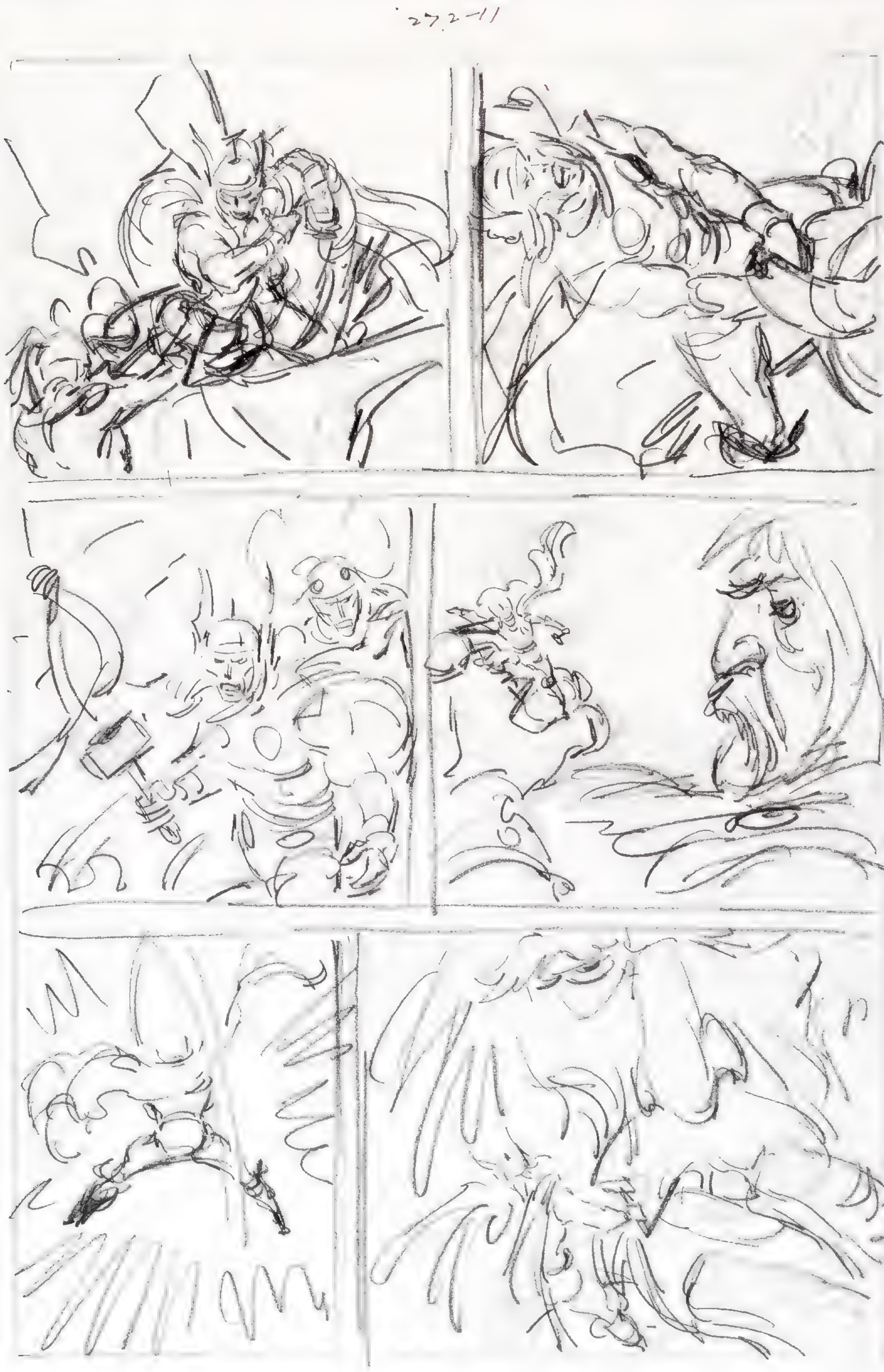
The Mighty Thor #272 cover pencil breakdown
by John Buscema

Courtesy Benny Gelillo

The Mighty Thor #272 cover original art
by John Buscema

Courtesy Benny Gelillo

The Mighty Thor #272, page 7 pencil breakdown
by John Buscema



Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

The Mighty Thor #272, page 7 original art
by John Buscema & Tom Palmer

MIGHTY THOR #272

11

"BUT, MINE INTEREST, AND LOKI'S, WERE ALL IN THE **BAG** AT HIS FEET...

'TIS A **TIGHT KNOT** THE GIANT HATH TIED.

THOU ART A GOD OF **MISCHIEF**, NOT OF **MIGHT.**

BEHOLD HOW THE MATCHLESS STRENGTH OF A **THUNDER GOD** CAN--

UNNH!

EVEN **MY** POWER CANNOT UNFASTEN THIS **SINGLE STRAND!**

BY THE **ALL-FATHER**-- DOTH THIS GIANT SEEK TO **STARVE** US, OR ELSE TO DRIVE US **MAD?**

WHAT WILT THOU **DO,** GOLDEN-HAIR?

DO?

WHY, **NAUGHT,** ASGARDIAN.

NAUGHT SAVE **SCRAMBLE** UPON THE GIANT'S PULSING **CARCASS**--

--TAKE MINE **HAMMER** IN HAND--

--AND **SMITE** HIM WITH THE FORCE OF A HEAVEN-SENT **THUNDERBOLT!**

THWA-OOM!

"TRULY, THE **EARTH** DID SHAKE-- **STORM-CLOUDS** ROILED AND RUMBLED--

"YET, MOMENTS LATER, WHEN THE THUNDER **STOPPED**...

HO, LITTLE ONE... I THINK I FELT SOME-THING.

DID A **LEAF** DROP LIGHTLY 'PON MINE HEAD, PER-CHANCE?

N-NAY, SKRYMIR.

MAYHAP I BUT IMAGINED IT, THEN.

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

The Mighty Thor #272, page 15 original art
by John Buscema & Tom Palmer

MIGHTY THOR #272

"AND THOU, GOD OF STORMS, DIDST BROOD BECAUSE THOU COULDST NOT LOWER THE LEVEL OF WATER IN MINE ENORMOUS HORN.

"LITTLE DIDST THOU SUSPECT--

"--THAT THE HORN'S NETHER END WAS SET IN THE GREAT **OCEAN** ITSELF!

"IN FACT, THOU DIDST LOWER THE LEVEL OF THE WATERS DOWN TO EBB-TIDE!

"AND THE CAT THOU DIDST STRIVE TO LIFT WAS NO CAT AT ALL--

"--BUT THE GARGANTUAN **MIDGARD SERPENT** WHICH GIRDLES THE EARTH AND HOLDS THE SEA IN PLACE!

"HOW I DID INWARDLY TREMBLE WHEN THOU DIDST LIFT THE CREATURE ALL UN-KNOWING, EVEN THE SLIGHTEST BIT!"

"**LOKI** ASKED THEE," SAYS THOR, "AND NOW **I** ASK THEE: **WHY** DIDST THOU TRICK THUS OUR SIGHT AND SENSES?"

WHY? BECAUSE I DESIRED TO TEST THE METTLE AND MERIT OF YE GODS!

IF YE WERE NOT STRONG OR BRAVE ENOW TO **STAND**, **WE GIANTS** WOULD INVADE ASGARD AT ONCE--

--AND THE DREADED DAY OF **RAGNAROK** WOULD OCCUR MIL-LENNIA SOONER THAN THE NORN-FATES PREDICT!

"WHEN YE FOUGHT ON, EVEN IN THE FACE OF FOUR DEFEATS, I SENT OLD **ELLI** AGAINST THEE...

"ELLI, SHE WHO IS THE PERSONIFI-CATION OF **OLD AGE** ITSELF!

"UNKNOWN TO THEE, SHE DID **AGE** THEE... AND THUS WEAKEN THEE!

27

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

Courtesy Benny Gelillo

The Mighty Thor #273 cover original art
by John Buscema & Tom Palmer

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THE MIGHTY THOR®
THE MONSTER WHOSE MAMMOTH COILS CAN CRUSH THE EARTH!! THE MIDGARD SERPENT!
STRIKE, O' DEVOURER OF WORLDS!
EITHER THOU OR THOR SHALL DIE THIS DAY!

Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

The Mighty Thor #273, page 17 original art
by John Buscema & Tom Palmer

THERE BE BUT ONE THING MIGHTIER FAR THAN THE DECREES OF THE ALL-FATHER:
THE PROPHECIES OF VOLLA--WHO ALONE DOTH KNOW AND HATH PREDICTED THE DIRE SECRET OF--RAGNAROK!*
AYE, RAGNAROK--THAT HOUR EVEN WHEN THE GODS SHALL DIE, BENEATH THE COMBINED FORCES OF GIANTS, TROLLS, MIDGARD SERPENT--AND LOKI!
NOW DO YE SEE, DOLTS?
HARRIS HOBBS SAW VISIONS OF THOR'S LONG-AGO BATTLE WITH THE MIDGARD SERPENT--VISIONS HE COULD NOT HAVE SEEN, E'EN IN DREAMS, EXCEPT HE BE DIVINELY INSPIRED BY THE SPIRIT OF MAD VOLLA!
THUS, I BROUGHT HIM TO ASGARD--BOTH TO PROVE TO YE ALL THAT THE PROPHECIES OF DOOM DO SPEAK THRU HIM--
--AND SO THAT HE MAY FILM HIS OWN DEATH, AND THAT OF THE UNIVERSE!
OFTTIMES HATH IT BEEN SAID THAT "RAGNAROK IS COMING"--AND THE NIGHTMARE NE'ER HATH COME TRUE.
BUT THIS TIME, FEAR NOT--RAGNAROK DOTH COME!!
THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS--THE END OF ALL THAT IS!
* SEE ISSUE* 200. --ROY.
THEN, LOKI STANDS SILENT, AND NO ONE SPEAKS...FOR A VERY LONG TIME...!
BUT FIRST: DEATH COMES FOR BALDER!
29
XEROX
STAN
STATS
CODE

Courtesy Benny Gelillo

The Mighty Thor #276, page 5 original art
by John Buscema & Tom Palmer

276

AS *PROSECUTOR*, SIRE, I FEEL 'TWOULD BE A *WASTING OF BREATH*--

--TO MENTION *ALL* THE VILE DEEDS LAID AT LOKI'S DOOR.

TIME AND AGAIN, HE HATH *BETRAYED* THEE, WHO DID *REAR* HIM...

...NAY, BETRAYED THE *REALM ENTIRE!*

"THE NOBLE *SILVER SURFER*--THE DREAD *DESTROYER*--THE MIND-SHATTERING *MANGOG*--ALL THESE HATH HE, AT ONE HOUR OR ANOTHER, TURNED *AGAINST* US.

"HE HATH E'ER DESIRED TO *RULE ASGARD* IN THY STEAD...

"...OR, FAILING THAT, TO SEE IT SUFFER *TOTAL DE-STRUCTION!*

AND NOW, IN FULL VIEW OF ALL, HE DID CAUSE THE DEMI-DEATH OF *BALDER*--AND NIGH *RAGNA-ROK* AS WELL, IF NOT FOR THINE *ODINPOWER.*

DO NOT *YET* COUNT THYSELF *SAFE*, THUNDERER!

IF BALDER *DIES*, THE REALM SHALL *STILL* FALL!

ENOUGH! THE DASTARD DOTH STAND CONVICTED OUT OF *HIS OWN MOUTH!*

YET--*NAY!* HE HATH A *RIGHT* TO BE *DEFENDED.*

WELL? IF ANY WOULD *SPEAK* FOR LOKI, LET HIM *NOW COME FORWARD!*

IN ALL THE ASSEMBLED HOST, NO GOD STIRS.

THEN--

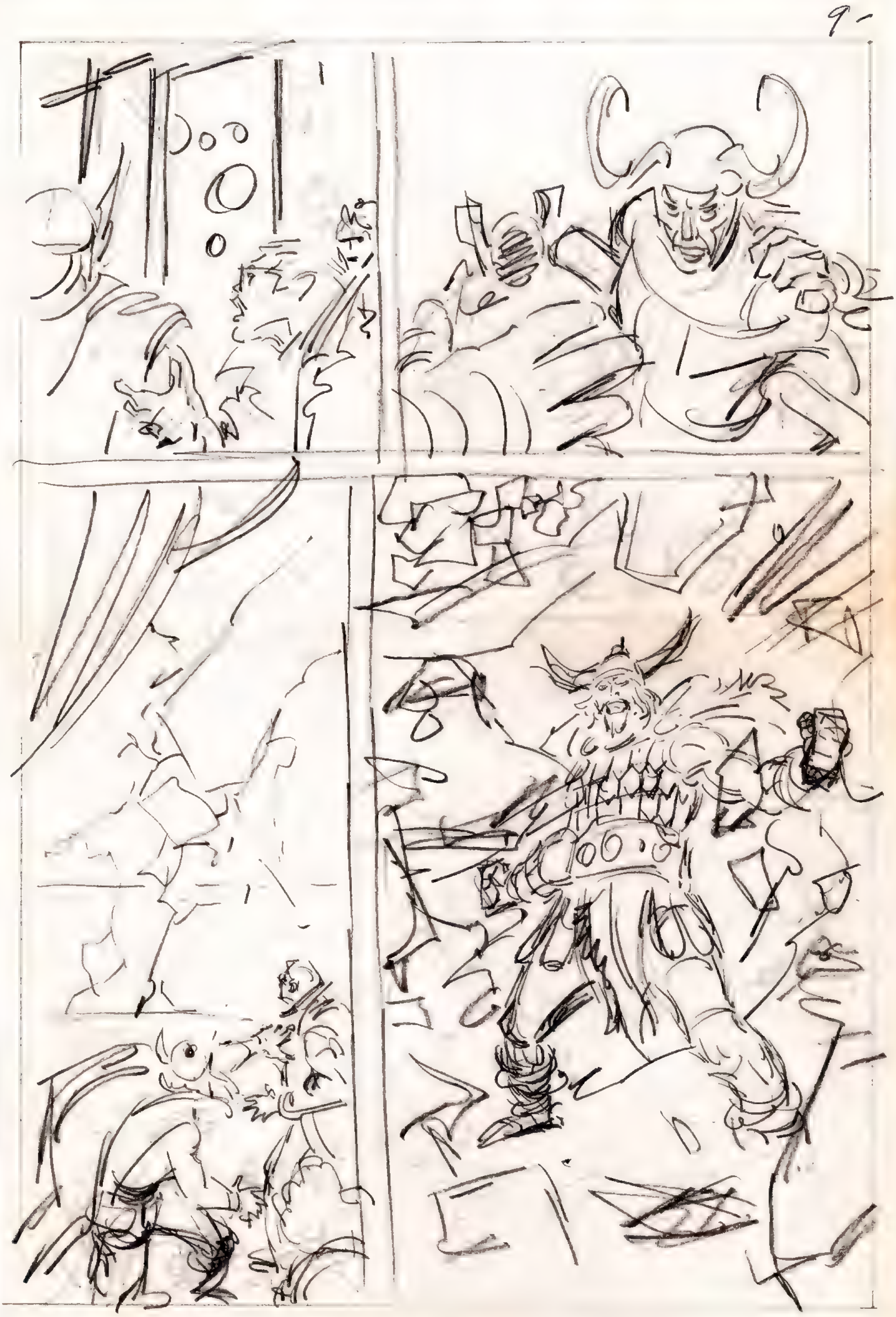
A *POX* UPON YE *ALL!*

LOKI, THEN, SHALL SPEAK FOR *HIM-SELF!*

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

The Mighty Thor #276, page 9 pencil breakdown
by John Buscema



Courtesy Benny Gelillo

The Mighty Thor #276, page 11 pencil breakdown
by John Buscema

Courtesy Benny Gelillo

The Mighty Thor #276, page 13 pencil breakdown
by John Buscema

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The Mighty Thor #277 cover original art
by John Buscema & Bob McLeod

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THE MIGHTY
THOR®
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KILL THOR--AND ASGARD FALLS!
ALONE I STAND-- WITHOUT MY HAMMER-- AGAINST THE HORDES OF HELA!
AND IF I FAIL-- THE DAY OF DOOM IS UPON US!
JB + BM

Courtesy Benny Gelillo

The Mighty Thor #277, page 17 original art
by John Buscema & Tom Palmer

"THEN, WITHQUT ODIN BESIDE HIM-- AND WIELDING MERELY A SWORD INSTEAD OF HIS MYSTIC MALLET, THE TRUE GOD OF THUNDER SHALL LEAD THE SONS OF THE REALM FORWARD TO WHAT HE KNOWS SHALL BE THEIR FINAL GLORY--
"--BECAUSE OF YOU, MORTAL! BECAUSE OF YOU!"
FOR ASGAAARD!
STRIKE, BROTHERS! IF THIS BE THE DAY THAT ASGARD MUST FALL--
NEXT ISSUE:
--LET NONE SURVIVE THE DAY OF RAGNAROK!

Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

The Mighty Thor #278 cover original art
by John Buscema & Bob McLeod

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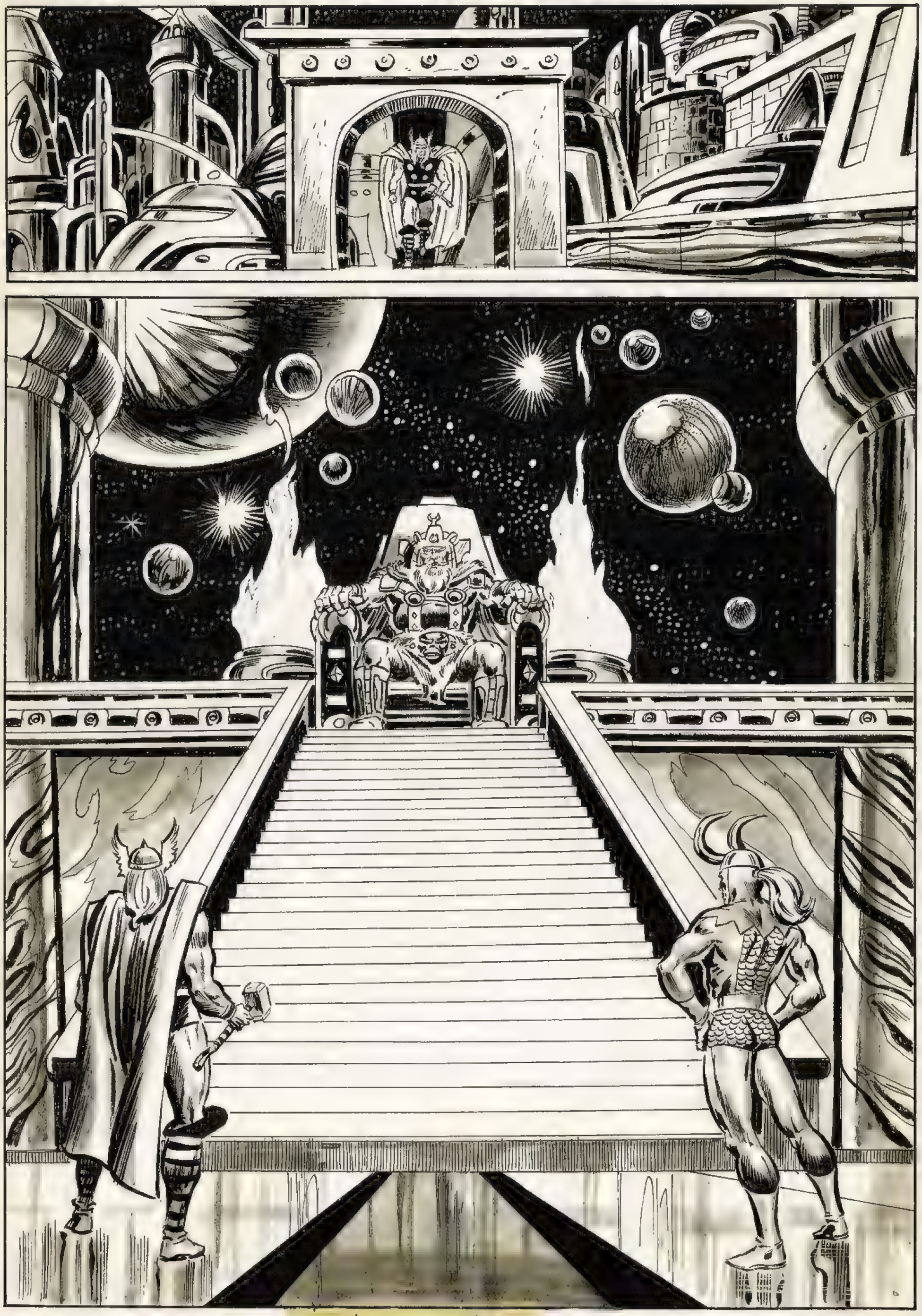
Marvel Preview #10, Thor, page 4 original art
by Jim Starlin & Tony DeZuniga



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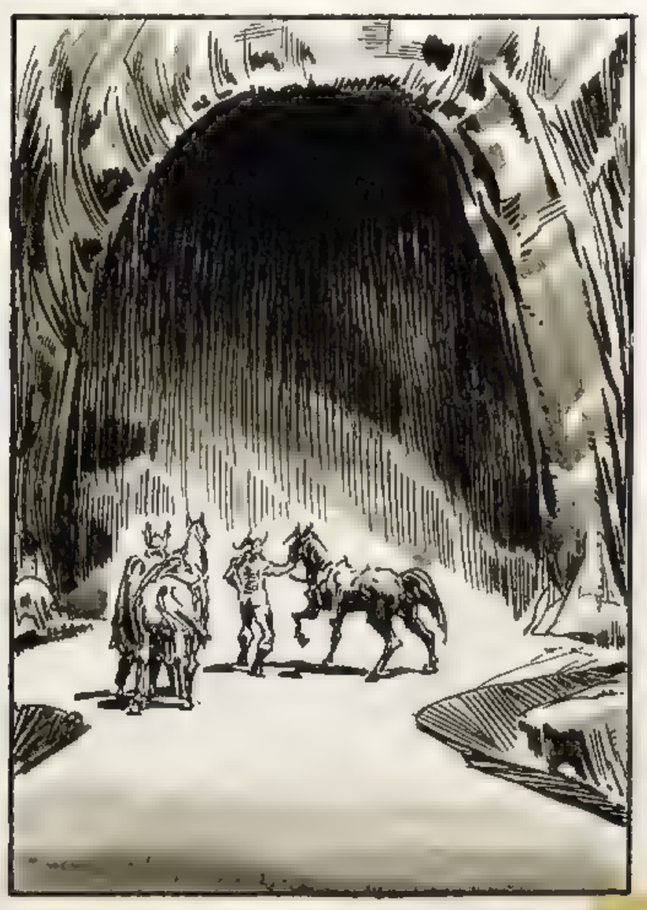
Marvel Preview #10, Thor, page 13 original art
by Jim Starlin & Tony DeZuniga



Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

Marvel Preview #10, Hercules, page 1 original art
by Val Mayerik

004410

HERCULES
THE PRINCE OF POWER

HERE LIES YOUR *ISLE OF FEAR*, FRIEND *JASON*.

THE *FIRST LEAGUE* OF OUR ACCURSED *JOURNEY*.

AYE, HERCULES... THE GODS HAVE *SPED* THE *ARGO* ON ITS WAY--

--BUT I DO *DREAD* THAT WHICH WE MUST *FIND HERE* -- AND THAT WHICH WE MUST *DO!*

I LIKE IT *NOT*, JASON! I HAVE READ THE *OMENS*-- AND THEY FORETELL *DISASTER!*

ART:

THE ISLE OF FEAR!

Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

Marvel Preview #10, Hercules, page 21 original art
by Val Mayerik

004425

THEN LET IT BE *KNOWN* THAT I, *JASON*, CAPTAIN OF THE *AGRO*--

--DO CLAIM THE *THRONE* OF *PYLOS* AND THE PAST-KING'S *DAUGHTER* FOR MY OWN!

TYRANNY IS DEAD, CITIZENS!

LONG LIVE JASON! LONG LIVE THE KING!!

AND LONG LIVE *GLORY* LAD! FORGET NOT *THAT!*

HERCULES! WHERE ARE YOU *GOING?*

AWAY, LAD! I'VE NO *PATIENCE* WITH KINGS OR *THRONES*--

--AND I GIVE YOU A *WEEK* BEFORE THE WENCH THROWS YOU OVER FOR *ANOTHER!*

'TIS NOT *MY WAY*, LAD! I PREFER A GOOD *BATTLE*-- MACE IN *HAND*--

--OR A *WOMAN* WHO HAS PROPER *RESPECT* FOR THE FACT THAT I BE THE *SON OF ZEUS!*

FARE THEE *WELL*, JASON! MAYBE OUR PATHS SHALL MEET *AGAIN*--

-- WHEN YOU'VE GIVEN UP HARD *THRONES* FOR THE FEEL OF A *DECK* ONCE MORE BENEATH YOUR *FEET!*

FIN

59 Pg 59 Pg 59.

Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

F.O.O.M. #21 (Spring 1978) featured this double-page spread pinup by future superstar *Thor* artist John Romita Jr.

Unused Thor pencil art by Rich Buckler
featured in *F.O.O.M.* #21 (Spring 1978)

BIOGRAPHIES

LEN WEIN

Len Wein's career is highlighted by successes from Swamp Thing to the "All-New, All-Different" X-Men, but few fans know that the award-winning writer and editor started out as a comic-book artist.

As a teenager, Wein was tied to the hip with fellow fanzine writer Marv Wolfman, regularly skipping school to tour the DC Comics offices. After building a rapport with artists and execs like Dick Giordano, Carmine Infantino and Joe Orlando, Wein was able to credibly pitch to the editors. Though his artwork was politely passed upon, a script for *House of Mystery* was accepted and a career as a writer was born. Len attacked his new occupation with gusto, writing for DC, Marvel, Gold Key and Skywald, on everything from Western to horror, and licensed properties from Hot Wheels to Star Trek.

Although his desired career as an artist didn't quite pan out, it did give Wein insight into his collaborator's creative process and helped him garner acclaim as a writer that was "easy to draw." After super-hero work in the early '70s (Daredevil, Superman, Flash), he and artist Bernie Wrightson launched horror mainstay Swamp Thing in the pages of *House of Secrets* #92. Other notable achievements from his tenure at DC include a run on *Justice League of America* and the debut of the Human Target.

Hopping over to Marvel in 1974, where he followed Roy Thomas as editor in chief, Wein scripted several series, including *Incredible Hulk*, where he and artist Herb Trimpe introduced one of comics' most famous characters—Wolverine. That wasn't the end of his mutant milestones, as with artist Dave Cockrum he revived the dormant X-Men property with a new international cast. Its cadre of characters, including Storm, Nightcrawler and Colossus would shortly turn into comics' biggest phenomenon.

Returning to DC, Wein helped spur a creative revival at the company, editing *New Teen Titans*, *Camelot 3000* and *Swamp Thing*, which gave writer Alan Moore his American debut; shortly thereafter, Wein would preside over Moore and Dave Gibbon's groundbreaking *Watchmen*. Since then, Wein's credits in comics, animation and television writing have been numerous and well received. He was inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame in 2008 and passed away in 2017, leaving behind a creative legacy celebrated worldwide.

ROY THOMAS

Along with fellow fan Jerry Bails, Roy Thomas developed the first known organized comic fandom in the pages of *Alter Ego*, a self-published fanzine. Leaving his teaching position in 1965, Roy took his deep knowledge of comics characters and their history and moved to New York City, accepting a job under DC Comics editor Mort Weisinger. His stay lasted little over a week before he opted for a position at Marvel, where under Stan Lee, his duties quickly matured from proofreading to more serious work as an editorial assistant and writer.

Titles as disparate as *Modeling With Millie*, *Kid Colt* and *Sgt. Fury* were written under his auspices before he was able to fulfill his desire to write super-hero stories on Iron Man in *Tales of Suspense* #73 and a pair of Dr. Strange stories for *Strange Tales*.

Stan must have liked what he was reading, because after this seeming trial period, Roy "The Boy" (as he was called in credits) was given both *Sgt. Fury* and *The X-Men*. Along with artist Werner Roth, Thomas took the X-Men on adventures around the world and told the characters' pre-X-Men origins. In addition to introducing Banshee, Sunfire and Havok, Thomas' X-Men credits also include his watershed collaboration with artist Neal Adams.

Proving his mettle on *X-Men* led him to *The Avengers*, and it was with this team that Roy really started crafting his legacy. Across 70 consecutive issues of Earth's Mightiest Heroes, he became perhaps the title's definitive writer, introducing characters such as the Vision and penning classic sagas including the "Kree/Skrull War." Before the '60s ended, Thomas chalked up noteworthy runs as writer of *Doctor Strange*, *Sub-Mariner*, *Captain Marvel* and more.

In the '70s, Thomas' influence at Marvel widened to include the first adaptation of Robert E. Howard's *Conan the Barbarian,* a reinvention of Adam Warlock, and a new super-team, The Defenders. By 1972 Roy was selected to succeed Stan Lee as editor in chief. His tenure as EIC lasted for over two years before he returned to his writer/editor role on *Fantastic Four*, *Thor*, *Savage Sword of Conan*, *What If...?* and *The Invaders*.

In 1980, he left the House of Ideas for DC to pursue a lifelong dream by reviving the Justice Society of America in the pages of *All-Star Squadron*. He wrote many more comics for DC and Marvel over the next two decades and is still active today, writing comics, historical studies, adaptations of classic novels and publishing his award-winning *Alter Ego*. Thomas' career contributions were acknowledged with his induction into the Eisner Hall of Fame's 2011 class. He lives in South Carolina with his wife and collaborator, Dann,

and an amazing menagerie of animals that must make the neighbors nervous.

WALTER SIMONSON

Walter Simonson mixed the power of Jack Kirby comics with an experimental European influence to produce a visual style that has made him one of his generation's foremost innovators.

After achieving acclaim for DC's "Manhunter" feature in *Detective Comics*, Simonson moved to Marvel's black-and-white magazine line where he illustrated an adaptation of Robert E. Howard's "The Hyborean Age" and penciled the first three issues of *Rampaging Hulk*. Next came a yearlong stint on *Thor* that would be far from his last encounter with the Asgardian hero. Simonson soon made a decisive shift to sci-fi. Adaptations of *Close Encounters of the Third Time* for Marvel and *Alien: The Illustrated Story* in *Heavy Metal* were followed by runs on *Battlestar Galactica*, which featured Simonson's first writing credits, and *Star Wars*. Simonson continued to develop his craft as a writer on Marvel's *Raiders of the Lost Ark* adaptation and *Marvel Graphic Novel* #6: *Star Slammers*, a concept revived from his art school days that he wrote, penciled and inked.

In 1982, Simonson teamed with writer Chris Claremont on the DC/Marvel crossover team-up of the X-Men and New Teen Titans. Shortly thereafter, he began his epochal run scripting and penciling *Thor*, the first issue of which introduced Beta Ray Bill and became one of the most highly acclaimed titles of the period. His collaboration with his wife, Louise, on *X-Factor* included the introduction of Archangel and Apocalypse. Later, the husband and wife team would write the *Havok & Wolverine: Meltdown* prestige miniseries.

In the early '90s, Simonson had a memorable run writing and drawing *Fantastic Four*. Other credits from this era included the *Iron Man: 2020* one-shot and *Avengers*. More recent work has included *Orion* at DC, *Elric: The Making of a Sorceror* with Michael Moorcock and *Avengers* and *Indestructible Hulk* for Marvel.

JOHN BUSCEMA

Though primarily known for his long tenure as one of Marvel Comics' most prolific pencilers, John Buscema began his celebrated career at the age of 21 with Timely Comics. After Timely closed its in-house Bullpen, Buscema pursued comics work for a time before he left comics altogether for advertising in 1958.

When he returned to comics, however, he did so with a vengeance. Stan Lee recruited him away from advertising and quickly ensconced him into the upper ranks of Marvel artists. Picking up where *Avengers* mainstay Don Heck left off, "Big John" began what would be one of the title's definitive artistic runs. The much-anticipated *Silver Surfer* series was launched with Buscema at the helm, and top-tier books like *Fantastic Four* and *Thor* were entrusted to his care after Jack Kirby left Marvel for DC Comics.

Buscema's bold, muscular artwork commanded the comic-book page with realistic figurework that represented the next evolutionary step in post-Kirby Marvel Comics style. The respect accorded him within Marvel as an artist's artist was of such renown that he literally wrote the book on drawing, composing *How To Draw Comics the Marvel Way* with Stan Lee, the classic "how to" book in comic-book illustration.

He worked from the '70s through the '90s on nearly every title in the Marvel stable, including his personal favorite, *Conan the Barbarian*, with Roy Thomas. He retired in 1996, but returned every now and then to the comics scene until he passed away after a battle with cancer in 2002, the same year he was inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame.

BILL MANTLO

From the mid-'70s through the late-'80s, Bill Mantlo established himself as one of the most dedicated writers in the comics industry, writing hundreds of stories across dozens of titles, primarily for Marvel Comics.

Mantlo broke into comics as a colorist, but it wasn't long before he was given a crack at writing a fill-in story, a "Sons of the Tiger" story in the black-and-white *Deadly Hands of Kung Fu* magazine, and his true comics talent began to emerge. The quality of his work led to his installation as that book's regular writer, a tenure that included the notable achievement of introducing comics' first Puerto Rican hero, the White Tiger.

After achieving notoriety within the Marvel offices as a guy who could knock out credible fill-in scripts at a moment's notice, Mantlo was given more regular work. One early highlight was his 20-issue tenure on *Iron Man* that began the Golden Avenger's return to prominence. As one might expect from someone with such a volume of work, Mantlo was game to take on projects others dismissed, and he did it with an unfeigned aplomb that elevated the work.

It was on two licensed titles that Mantlo built his legacy. Inspired by a toy given to his son at Christmas, Mantlo lobbied Marvel to adapt Micronauts into an ongoing series. The award-winning epic he spun with artistic luminaries like Michael Golden and Pat Broderick is still highly revered by comics fandom as is his even longer run on *Rom*, wherein he developed a universe filled with Spaceknights, Dire Wraith

monsters and outer space intrigue. Other notable credits in Mantlo's career include *Incredible Hulk*, *Alpha Flight* and *Spectacular Spider-Man.*

Just as Mantlo had begun a new career as a public defender with the New York City Legal Aid Society, he was struck by a hit-and-run driver and went into a weeks-long coma from severe head trauma. He has since been under constant medical care. The comics community has led multiple fundraisers to aid in the continuing care of a talented writer who is missed by his many fans.

VAL MAYERIK

Val Mayerik was born in the steel town of Youngstown, Ohio, and worked in the mills to earn money for college. His artist friend and mentor Dan Adkins opened the door for him at Marvel, where he quickly found work drawing Thongor the Barbarian in *Creatures on the Loose*, as well as adaptations of John Jakes' Brak the Barbarian in *Chamber of Chills* and H.G. Wells' Invisible Man in *Supernatural Thrillers*. In addition to his regular work on Thongor, Mayerik illustrated the macabre Man-Thing in *Fear*, and would carry on drawing into the character's self-titled series in 1974. Mayerik quickly became a key contributor to Marvel's early '70s horror revival, augmenting his Man-Thing work with *Frankenstein* and the Living Mummy in *Supernatural Thrillers*. It was in the 19th issue of *Fear* that Mayerik would co-create one of comics' most unusual and memorable characters, Howard the Duck. In 1976, Mayerik began a six-issue stint drawing *Ka-Zar*, a title he would return to in 1982 for the "Tales of Zabu" backup. In between penciling assignments, Mayerik inked a host of comics as well. Mayerik also had an interest in acting, starring in the low-budget horror film *The Demon Lover* in 1977 and acting off-Broadway. By the early '90s, Mayerik was drawing various Punisher series and *Bruce Lee*, a six-issue 1994 series from Malibu, but he had begun to transition to work in advertising. He returned to comics in 2015 after successfully funding a Kickstarter initiative to draw *Of Dust and Blood*, an original graphic novel about Little Big Horn.

JIM STARLIN

When Jim Starlin came along in the early '70s, super-hero comics were populated primarily by earthbound heroes, but this young writer/artist revolutionized "cosmic" comics, a genre full of space-opera drama and high-minded philosophizing that required the expansive reaches of the universe to fully flourish.

Inspired as a young man by Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko, in 1972 Starlin followed fellow Detroiter Rich Buckler to Marvel. After assisting John Romita on Spider-Man and drawing covers, Starlin spun a short stint on *Iron Man*— where he introduced Thanos and Drax the Destroyer – into the beginnings of an epic *Captain Marvel* saga that would redefine the character.

In late 1973, Starlin and writer Steve Englehart launched the first kung fu comic in the pages of *Special Marvel Edition*, and later in *Shang-Chi, Master of Kung Fu*. Then, in perhaps his most ambitious work to date, Jim revived Roy Thomas and Gil Kane's Adam Warlock, taking the messianic hero to mind-bending new heights. The short run on the cosmic character is still regarded as a high point of '70s Marvel.

By the late '70s, Starlin headed over to DC, but in 1982 he returned to Marvel for the *Death of Captain Marvel* graphic novel. Inspired by Starlin's compulsion to work through the death of his father, the story is considered to be his masterpiece. Soon after, *Dreadstar*, the debut title of Marvel's Epic line, introduced fans to Starlin's wholly original cosmic concept. Writing and drawing the adventures of Vanth Dreadstar as he fought against the monolithic vestiges of church and state, Starlin guided the series throughout a long and successful run. At DC, Starlin penned the milestone "A Death in the Family" in *Batman*, which culminated in Robin's demise; *Batman: The Cult* and *The Weird* with Bernie Wrightson; and *Cosmic Odyssey* with Mike Mignola.

In the early '90s, he took over writing *Silver Surfer* for a 17-issue run that reintroduced Thanos and Adam Warlock. At the same time, he wrote the first chapters in what would be a sprawling epic that would play out over the next 15 years with *The Thanos Quest*, *The Infinity Gauntlet*, *Infinity War* and *Infinity Crusade*. In 2001, Starlin would return to Warlock and Thanos in the *Infinity Abyss* and *Thanos*.

Recent projects include *Kid Kosmos* for Dynamite, *Death of the New Gods* and *Mystery In Space* for DC and a series of *Thanos* original graphic novels for Marvel.

Biographies researched and written by John Rhett Thomas

THE MARVEL MASTERWORKS

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THE GOLDEN AGE

As the Great Depression wore on and the specter of war hung over America, a new storytelling medium was born: the comic book. Within their four-color pages, larger-than-life super heroes could make short work of America's foes, giving readers of all ages hope for victory against the real-life enemies that faced the United States. At the forefront of this new medium was Timely Comics, a young company staffed by such legendary creators as Carl Burgos, Bill Everett, Joe Simon, Jack Kirby and Stan Lee. These trailblazing talents birthed a vast array of characters that would give rise to the Marvel Universe!

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GOLDEN AGE SUB-MARINER VOLS. 1-3
GOLDEN AGE U.S.A. COMICS VOLS. 1-2
GOLDEN AGE YOUNG ALLIES VOLS. 1-2

THE ATLAS ERA

Seeing super heroes waning, Timely Comics evolved into Atlas Comics and took on a vast new range of genres: science-fiction tales of outer space adventures; realistic war comics; buxom jungle heroines; horror comics that would become the center of a moral panic that rocked the industry; and romance comics for the emerging teen audience. Even the classic costumed heroes of the Golden Age retooled to take on the threat of Communism. From Western gunfighters to crime to horror, the Atlas Era had it all!

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ATLAS ERA BLACK KNIGHT/YELLOW CLAW VOL. 1
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ATLAS ERA JUNGLE ADVENTURE VOLS. 1-3
ATLAS ERA MENACE VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA STRANGE TALES VOLS. 1-6
ATLAS ERA TALES TO ASTONISH VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA TALES OF SUSPENSE VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA VENUS VOL. 1

THE MARVEL AGE

In August 1961, change hit newsstands: *The Fantastic Four* #1 did not feature the squeaky-clean heroes of yesteryear. They were real characters placed in extraordinary circumstances. They lived together, they fought among themselves — and sometimes, they even lost to the bad guys. This was more than a change in attitude: It was the beginning of something entirely different — the beginning of the Marvel Age of Comics!

Thanks to the fertile imaginations of Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and others, an unending list of heroes followed the FF with ever-increasing acclaim and popularity: the Amazing Spider-Man, the Mighty Thor, the Incredible Hulk, Daredevil, Iron Man and the X-Men, to name but a few. These were the Marvel heroes, born of conflict and a continuous struggle to balance human lives with superhuman responsibilities.

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THOR
BY ODIN! I MUST STOP THE DEADLY MISSILE PLUNGING TOWARDS ME--
--ERE IT DESTROYS THE UNITED NATIONS!
THE THUNDER GOD RETURNS TO EARTH--
TO MIDGARD--AND MAYHEM!

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THOR
THE STILT-MAN HATH RETURNED--AND MY HAMMER CANNOT STOP HIM!!
BUT HIS ROCKET-PODS MAY SOON SLAY ME!!
AND IF THAT ISN'T TROUBLE ENOUGH FOR OUR HERO--WAIT'LL YOU SEE STILTY'S NEW PARTNER!

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THE MIGHTY
THOR
UNLESS I REGAIN MY MYSTIC HAMMER WITHIN SIXTY SECONDS, I AM DOOMED--
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LAY DOWN AND DIE, ASGARDIAN! TODAY IS MINE!

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EITHER THOU OR THOR SHALL DIE THIS DAY!

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LONG LIVE THE NEW ORIGINAL THOR!

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KILL THOR--AND ASGARD FALLS!
ALONE I STAND--WITHOUT MY HAMMER--AGAINST THE HORDES OF HELA!
AND IF I FAIL--THE DAY OF DOOM IS UPON US!

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THOR
KEEP OUTTA MY WAY, YELLOW HAIR!
THIS IS A JOB FOR THOR, THE REAL GOD OF THUNDER!
AND NOW.. RAGNAROK!

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